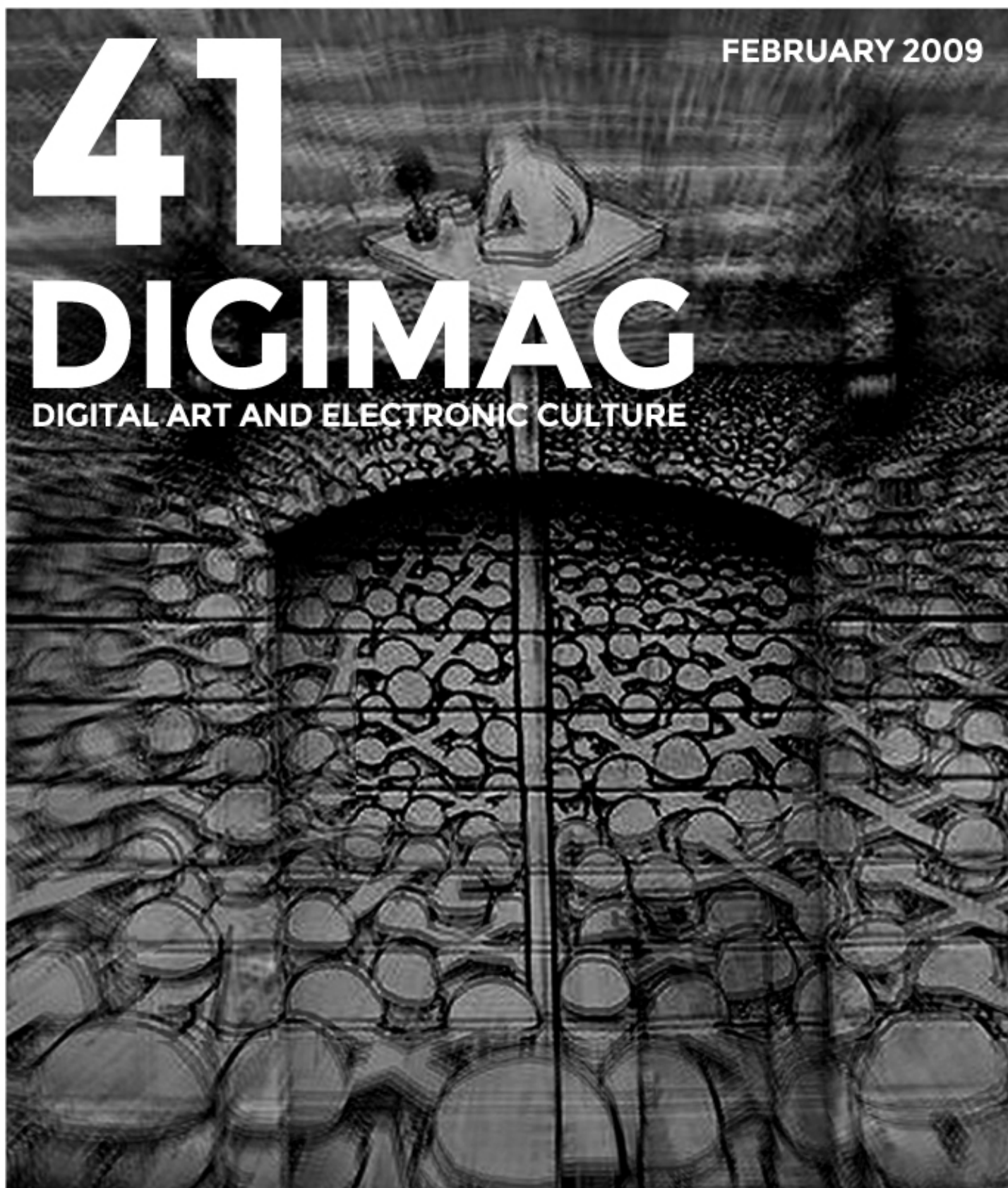


FEBRUARY 2009

41 DIGIMAG

DIGITAL ART AND ELECTRONIC CULTURE



EDUARDO NAVAS / TREVOR WISHART
OTOLAB / CADA PLATFORM
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Otolab Method

Claudia D'Alonzo



The interview to Otolab is a result of the event that was organised on January 16th by the O' Gallery of Milan, in collaboration with Marco Mancuso, Digicult curator. During that evening, some members of the Milanese collective (which has come at its eighth year of life) could meet, have talks and watched the national exclusive preview of some of their recent creations, such as "Circo ipnotico"(Hypnotic circus) and "Giardini neri" (Black Gardens).

A few hours together transported the otolab phenomenon into the gallery event room: not only an artistic entity, yet also and above all a means to improve interpersonal relationships and sharing. That is the heart of the collective, which has been configuring itself as a rhizomatic core that can tag along and connect, cross different

worlds and generate them. An open and complex system, in which the mutual relationship of every element causes something unexpected and unpredictable. A spontaneous and changeable complexity, made up with the members's different experiences and attitudes, that otolab transformed into a method: a relational and creative method, a laboratory audiovisual-experience method, an approach to technological tools and to an interaction with the audience.

An audience which is the reflexion of otolab, an aggregation and mixture of origins and contexts. A composite audience, as well as the one that was at the soirée in the Galleria O', a varied crowd that converged there for the same interest in the collective. The purpose of this meeting was to keep two completely different live together, Circo Ipnotico and Giardini Neri, to produce the heterogeneous product of the group, compare two absolutely different poetics and experiences of audiovisual live performance. The analogical digital improvisation, the audiovisual trip violence of Circo Ipnotico, as well as the almost cinematographic inner trip of Giardini Neri.



“Giardini Neri” is a new component in otolab production, and not only from the chronological point of view; it is an experience that moves away from a style whose main topic is to reduce visual patterns. The last live performance leads one’s eyes through a tridimensional journey, and lets the spectator find vegetal elements where the scene is plunged in atmospheric evanescences, filtered lights mirrored on water. An immersion into darkness, which both environmental and internal. Otolab hasn’t explored this aspect of narration as story, of the environment born to reflect an inner life.

Many works by otolab act through audiovisual stimulation inside the observer, and they lead him to experience the perception of his self. The trip of “Giardini Neri” is instead an emotional emanation, the senses are transported through suspended as well as obscure suggestions, images

fathom to desert landscapes commuted by sounds. Till the final implosion given by water. The vision of the liquid element, from 3D synthetic realism, suddenly breaks into its graphic structure, a breach made into the mind and the shape, towards an optical tunnel, a perceptive unconsciousness. An initiation to a new lie for the image, a perceptive resurrection which marks a double limit, a transformation walking concurrently on two levels: the formal one related to the image, from the figurative to the optical side, and the symbolic one that goes past into an inner and individual state. The 3D image of the water, a realistic kind, suddenly opens towards its frame. All this can be read as a revelation of the image’s nature, of what looks like real but that heeds a synthetic structure, and at the same time as abandonment familiar perceptive environments; the real frame moved to pure vision, broken and arranged into an elementary geometry of black and white.

So, “Giardini Neri” is the starting point for an interview to otolab for Digicult, because a meeting between these two realities is needed, as both otolab and Digicult have run after common directions over the years, have collaborated, have come across the professional and personal spheres.



Claudia D'Alonzo: Let's start from "Giardini Neri": could you tell me how it was born, how did the production of this project develop?

Xo00: It originated from Mud's mental disease, which kept expressing itself during our tour in Mexico: he shut himself into his house for a week, in the sunniest place in the world. He could do anything, and instead he stayed inside the house for a week just to depict the idea he had in his mind. In fact, the project comes from Mud both for the audio and for the video. It was later integrated by other otolab members. Androsyn, Dies_ and me

Mud: Androsyn has enormously contributed to the 3D creation in all the most complex parts. The fluids, the particle systems, were possible thanks to him, because he had very specific competencies absolutely unusual in otolab.

Androsyn: My intervention was

following a common fully detailed project. The means of particles and fluids wasn't only used for a technological or algorithmic purpose, but it was needed for the development of some elements during the final touch. Most of the project was by that time completed, but some forms of expression of the situation were missing.

Mud: As far as I worked alone, Giardini Neri was still a series of audiovisual images, yet without a structure, a complete narrative pressure. It was rather a series of rooms, that is a series of successive areas. The upheaval came by the time I had dropped the project for some months. I put it on the table again to prepare a new live performance and I asked Dies_ to give me a hand to take decisions on the audio. Dies_'s contribution was very important for the story.

Xo00: However there was a basic idea, that was a journey into the gardens of the soul. The rooms needed a connection, a unique trip that went through them. .



Claudia D'Alonzo: Did the other otolab step in at that moment?

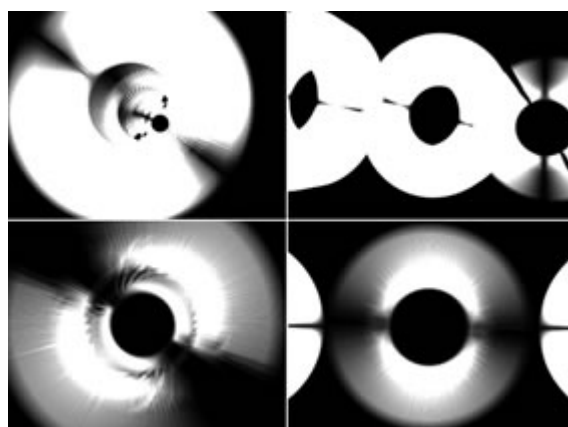
Mud: Exactly. In the audio I used some of Dies, Scrub and Chiara Frantini (a trainee of mine) audio samples, by giving them a frame. From the audiovisual point of view, apart from the musical structure the point was to yield a valid story in a dramaturgical sense. We felt that this sequence of rooms, be they beautiful or subjectively interesting, needed a breach. That was an opportunity for further considerations: through the water, we thought we glimpsed an element giving access to the endless world. The optical drift of the end represents the gateway towards the absolute, from a figurative and contextual world to an unlimited dimension.

Xo00: From this dark atmosphere, at times somewhat threatening, there's the access to a dimension other than the real one.

Claudia D'Alonzo: "Giardini Neri" is a very narrative creation, of course not in absolute terms but in relation to otolab's work. You already told me how did the storyboard come into existence. Nonetheless, I think that in every otolab creation there's a storyboard and that this is more explicit in some of them, while it is

less clear in some others. What is the difference between the narrative structure in Giardini Neri and other creations? For instance I'm thinking about Op7, where the construction of the different phases in the live performance is still reachable by the observer, or other works like Circo Ipnotico, where the narration is less clear...

Xo00: Between "Op7" and "Giardini Neri" I don't see much difference, apart from the creation procedures. In "Op7" we worked all together from the very first moment, the entire collective took part into the concept and to the structural building as well, which was divided into very precise chapters. "Giardini Neri" comes instead from a project that Mud had already been developing on his own, so there was a storyboard on his mind, and the following work we completed together was no more than add the required elements to complete it.



Img: courtesy by Otolab

Claudia D'Alonzo: And so you worked in both projects following a structure made of "panels"?

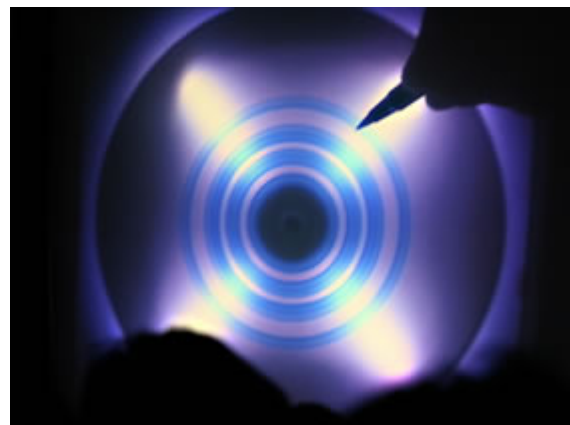
Mud: Yes, the idea of the narrative structure is interesting. "Op7" is based on a symbolic structure, Kiefer's seven towers, that is the essence of the concept. All the seven towers have the same importance, no one is more relevant than the other ones, they all hold the same degree of plainness. Each one has its own characteristics but they all have the same kinetic importance. In Giardini Neri there is a different line, which was what I had been searching for, from a beginning to an end. As a result, it isn't an homogeneous track divided in chapters, as it is in Op7, with a structure such as the one of "tunnel break new tunnel".

Xo00: Yes, in "Op7" there are seven different travels, while "Giardini Neri", as well as "Circo Ipnotico", are just one trip, one passage

Mud: Indeed, in "Circo Ipnotico" there's a deeper storyboard and it is influenced by the mask changing of the psychoscope, by lighter changing: the theme is always the same, therefore it is more balanced. .

Androsyn: In "Circo Ipnotico" you go

through extremely abstract subjects as for instance hypnosis, which cannot be applied as an objective picture but as an individual one and an experience. While in "Giardini Neri" there is a familiar context, even to depict plants. The branches are a recall, a familiarization with an already familiar place. That's in everyone's dream memory exactly for an environmental confirmation, with fog, rarefied lights and nightly wood crossing. I supported the idea of those silhouettes moving backlight and creating shadings that directly recall a natural habitat, the one we have in our DNA.



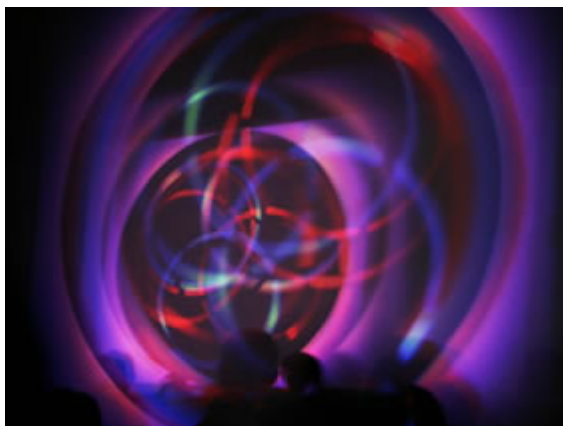
Claudia D'Alonzo: Natural beauty, but at the same time its abstraction, in fact the form of those plants is naturally closer to a pattern or to fractals ...

Androsyn: Yes indeed, inside there's a very fractal element, which remembers algorithmic models. That's

beautiful, because it gives a sense of double sense of belonging to the world of Giardini Neri, the one of logical conception and the other one of almost genetic memory.

Claudia D'Alonzo: What was the kind of work on the audio? Is there the purpose to blend the synthetic and the natural domains?

Mud: We had to decide on the audio: after the first proposals, I added sound-tracks to the videos. They were a kind of dream sound-scape, searching for an emotional synesthesia, not pointing at precise aspects. The audio phase is not a particularly radical task, I'm absolutely conscious of that. The audio's intention that goes with the images is not to upset further on. I looked for some audiovisual matching that could allow a sweeter observation of the images, balance the video's haziness, make the anxiety of the image more attractive.



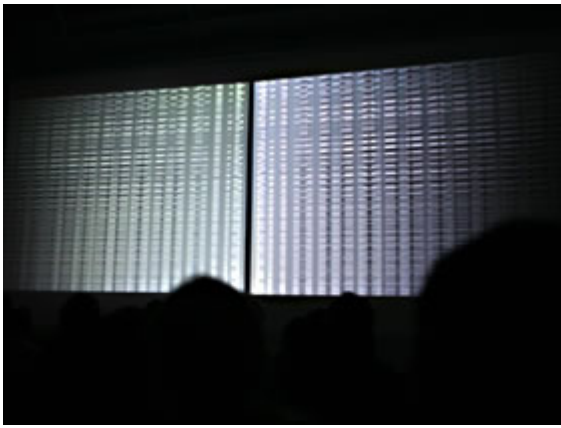
Claudia D'Alonzo: Do you think to re-elaborate or develop again this sort of creation?

Xo00: By now the object is to create a DVD, look for a production. During all these years, otolab's need to produce a DVD has arisen. For sure, the live performance has its own characteristics, but we need to freeze these projects

Claudia D'Alonzo: Do you think about Giardini Neri because according to you it satisfies a unique nature that is most appropriate for a video , compared to other works in which the space component and the live set up are more important?

Xo00: Yes, "Giardini Neri" is very cinematic and it has a layout that doesn't lose anything when it shifts from two monitors to one. It is different from other lives, in which the use of several monitors is crucial.

Mud: It is even more suitable to try the singularities of DVD creations, to work on synesthesias which are managed with limited estimation possibilities, as a live is shown real-time. Time rendering doesn't cause this sort of problems. This production would be different from a live work, because some synesthetic elements can be pushed to the extreme.



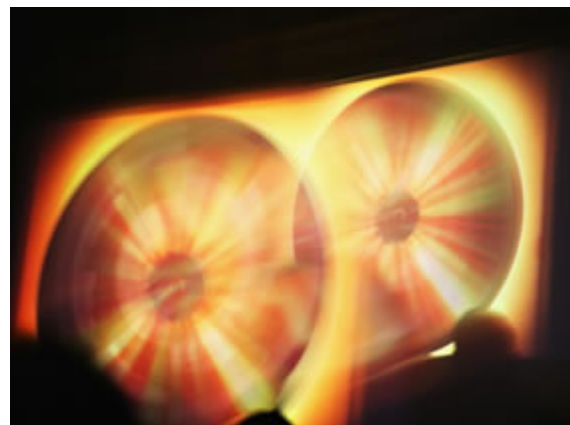
Claudia D'Alonzo: A question about the general state of otolab, from inside and after the soirée at O' gallery, which I think was very successful. How do you perceive this moment in otolab, give a consideration about the audience. I think that during these years some audience that follow you, caring for your work. Do you perceive anything?

Xo00: Yes, the evening in O' was very strong, also because we don't organise many evenings of that kind in Milan . My impression was that our fans were there, as well as people who come from the gallery or Digicult circuit.

Claudia D'Alonzo: Beyond the O' soirée, could you take stock of the last years, of how you managed to be known by the audience?

Xo00: Indeed, in the last years there was a progression but I wouldn't have been able to define it at that time. I'm thinking about when we created the

"Quartetto.swf" at Netmage 03: the live was much expected, but we were completely unknown and the audience greatly participated. That probably happened because the news spread and a few words were written about us. Some time before we had won the Italian Live Media Contest, probably our participation was well communicated ... I know that there were great expectations at that moment. And obviously, time after time we did several things, that even had few audience, in some occasions. But I think that it is from the Netmage 2004 that an Italian audience began to follow us.



Claudia D'Alonzo: As you started from the underground and you took part into festivals, rather than galleries or international spaces, do you have an idea of the kind of fans you have and how it changed through time?

Mud: otolab audience is rather heterogeneous, we go from flashings

to designers or simply to the experts of digital imaging, audio-video interaction, live interaction. It is mostly a wide audience of art and entertainment.

Claudia D'Alonzo: However is it inside the electronic world?

Mud: Yes, but very wide-ranging, from raves to cultured sectors, because we work in the contemporary music sector as for raves or non-institutional spaces. I think that the audience well reflects the heterogeneity of our projects and of the areas in which we propose them.

Claudia D'Alonzo: I think this is one of the most interesting aspects in otolab and not expected at all: it is not expected that, starting from counter-culture and going towards contemporary art and institutional culture, this heterogeneity can assemble inside your audience and arouse some attention. The soirée in O' seems to exemplify perfectly otolab's particular ability.

Orgone: The soirée of Sincronie 2004 at the PAC was a fantastic example in that sense. Sinfonie is a contemporary music Festival which sets every year in Milan , maybe it is the most interesting festival in the town. For that event we developed several projects for Sincronie. It was very well received by the public. But it was very

funny to see the traditional audience of contemporary music in Milan , even more elderly people mixed with our younger underground audience, with piercing and tattoos. I think it was a peculiar experience for everyone .



Photo courtesy by Otolab

Claudia D'Alonzo: How did each field of deal with influence your work? How did they condition some positive or negative choices over the years, as well as some limitations and possibilities?

Xo00: I think we travelled along several spheres and that we maintained the same state of versatility all over the years, because we have in our group people coming from different worlds. Maybe at the beginning we were more pop. But I remember that when at the beginning we organised events in social centres (for example the Bulk in Milan, a very devastated place), without means , we tried to give a research style, even

in the exhibitions, without endorsing to the audio or video stereotypes that circulated in that sphere. We even organised a mini audiovisual festival at Bulk, and we invited some artists experiencing new music rather than the same dance soirée. I remember that even at that time there were radical choices that people didn't accept. We showed our projects in sectors that were away from that sort of things, that would have probably worked well in a gallery or in a different set.

Claudia D'Alonzo: What's your working principle to present your material in so different fields

Xo00: First of all there are some creations that have a precise storyboard, a defined time and that fully insert into the format of the festival. In the community centres more often there are dance situations, entertainment, soirées that last six/seven hours. The requests are varied.



Claudia D'Alonzo: Do you think that the counterculture circuits, the community centres, that is your original world, care less your live production, performance, and structured works?

Xo00: Less? According to me they don't exist. I didn't hear about them in Italy. Once there was the Link, but then it became a haunt. We experienced V_, the festival we were talking about at Bulk, but after that I don't generally see much attention.

Mud: Festival ... yes the first edition of the Netmage was inside the Link.

Claudia D'Alonzo: Yes, the Netmage is another example of an important reality in the electronic music which was born into the community centres. Therefore, according to you, the underground areas are a fertile field to arise some electronic testing experiences, and paradoxically the same areas aren't open towards the evolutions of these testings?

Xo00: Not at its better level compared to its possibilities. There's no planning in these spaces. I don't know any community centre interested in it.

Claudia D'Alonzo: Do you think this is due to the absence of mediums?

Mud: According to me a consciousness and a true interest don't exist yet.

Orgone: According to me, indeed, the community centres have been for a long time a fertile breeding medium for loads of technological experimentations. In Milan it worked with Leoncavallo and Conchetta to

begin with, there were ECN and Decoder, Breda and Bulk, the electronic music began to reveal itself and the Hacklab came to existence. Many people coming from our circles owe much to the movement sectors, as regards cultural growth. That's why we were angry for the Cox18 evacuation these days. What a shame for the city! Unexpectedly the community centres weren't able to make the grade in their event management planning capacity. As a consequence, the artists who had explored more professional international domains gradually drew away. That doesn't inhibit the event organisation in sites suited for dance music, as for instance the Natale Anticlericale in Torchiera. .



Claudia D'Alonzo: Otolab mostly identified with live media, and performance. Do live creations somehow reproduce the group planning stage, or are they absolutely different?

Mud: Staging needs are different from the live performance ones. Anyway, every choice, during the staging phase, is planned to realise a live performance. As for the live itself, we are trying to become the more interchangeable. In fact I wouldn't cut off the possibility that otolab members may perform Giardini Neri.

Xo00: It depends on the creation. For instance, in Circo ipnotico we are five and there is much live, more than in other performances. Here the outcome is readily altered, the live is different if different otolab members work on machines. Other lives are more well organised, they planning of stuffs is more elaborated and the live issue isn't much different, it is consequently easier to alternate.

Mud: This comes very spontaneously, as everyone shared this method from the start; it means working with the purpose to make the best choices for the live performance. In the first live our experience wasn't well distributed and didn't share it to express our pliability. This way now it is easy to face every kind of craft, as we have set our method.



Claudia D'Alonzo: Compared to the collective's constitution, that has an open structure which has been changing over the years, some members were admitted, some others went away. This openness is a potentiality, but I think it was also difficult to manage. How did you meet the consensus of a continuously growing group and the exit of some representatives?

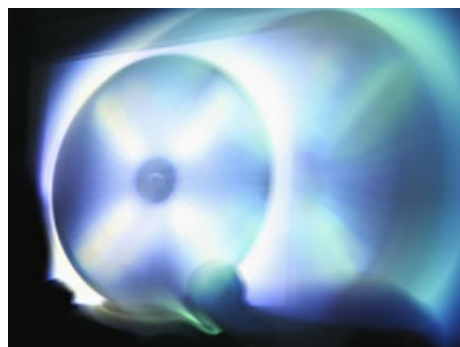
Mud: That's the routine group dynamics, there are different duty quantity and capacity. Enthusiasm and mutual aims are the most important thing. If there are interesting projects, that can create a good humus for new creations, things go. Anyway, otolab is not a nonprofit production studio, and we produce just what we like.

Claudia D'Alonzo: How did you keep mutual intentions?

Xo00: According to me it is almost a miracle, I'm surprised too. Some people went away because they disagreed with some choices by otolab, as well as with personal life preferences. There are also people who approach otolab and endure, and other people who stay with us for a short time. But probably otolab is in the black because a number of people always found anyhow something they

couldn't have achieved alone in their experience of the audio-video. It is not a rational retrospection, yet it is emotional.

Orgone: During a long summit, some months ago, in which we tried to examine these transformations, a fundamental aspect was emerged: on the one hand, the many changes, conflicts and transformations during such a long period are a natural fact; on the other hand it is true that many of the critic phases are connected to the fact that after 8 years we still find it difficult to break the barrier with cultural institutions, which should help us administer our work. This is true for us as well as for any other person dealing with electronic art in Italy, where there is not culture and consciousness at all in front of the argument. Therefore there were some moments of great potential projects to run in the laboratory, but not much occasions to present them. And this can engender some tension. Although not all of the cloud has a silver lining: staying on the sidelines raises your self-consciousness, your awareness of what you do and how you do it.



Claudia D'Alonzo: How did these changes in the collective influence the numerous projects?

Xo00: I think Circo Ipnotico is a good example, because it originates from people who have quite recently approached otolab and have taken part to the realization by encouraging with new stimuli. It is a non-studied project, it is a work in progress that has slowly modified and has grown by the collection of different contributions.

Orgone: from this point of view, I'm particularly enthusiast about the studies that are being done in the laboratory on auto-produced software for live performances. There are people relatively "new" who plunged with enthusiasm in the exploration of these worlds. And I'm sure that something interesting will come out.

Claudia D'Alonzo: Sharing knowledge is one of the main elements in otolab. It materialises even in the workshop activities and in the didactics, bringing this knowledge outside the collective. Do you think these kinds of activities changed through time, as methods, contents or objectives?

Mud: the idea is to try to spread acquired knowledge, culture, a interest for particular forms of

creativity, in otolab. All this falls into otolab's point of view.

Xo00: this method is not so far from the one we use inside otolab. As a fact, we generally teach to people that know less than us, but we often experience together things that we consider useful.



Img: courtesy by Otolab

Claudia D'Alonzo: Is there a difference between the didactics in schools and workshops?

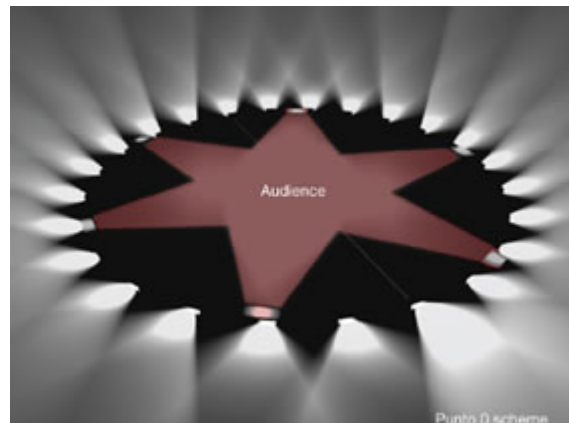
Xo00: Much easier that the sharing atmosphere in otolab proliferates. The ones we have been organising until now lasted five days, during which we dedicated night and day to the production together with all the guys. The benefit of the teaching courses is that we have much more people to confront with and have a feedback. As regards the contents, I don't believe

they have changed over the years. We don't attempt to communicate the use of a technology rather than another one, or to teach great philosophies. We aim to communicate a working method, our method.

Orgone: The most interesting thing is that during the workshops there is a very strong feedback process. The guys are often hyperexcited because they want to draw everything from that experience. And this leads us towards fields we had not explored yet. For example, at the Summer School in 2008 students presented some lives with projections on architectonic spaces, the complex live electronic augmented architectures, or as you wish to call them ... it was something we have been interested in for long, but that we didn't have the opportunity to study in deep. We did it for the first time with the students, and the results were very satisfying for everyone.

Claudia D'Alonzo: One aspect of this method, that came out of the meeting in O', was the experimentation of new projects, new live, hardware that can be produced in otolab, left aside and then reopened after some time. The development of some works can follow an even longer and fragmentary period of time. Do you have some works you wish to reopen by now?

Orgone: Actually, the whole life in the laboratory is surrounded by tens of projects that can't rightly be unattended. We rather see them as frozen. And the funny thing is that maybe after many years someone studies the stuff again, upsets it and extrapolates a completely different project. I believe that is one of the most beautiful aspects of otolab's life.



Img: courtesy by Otolab

Mud: Among them there is certainly "Punto Zero", which we would like to undertake more determinably.

Xo00: We consider it as a incomplete project. We presented it once at a festival in Trentino, in Porto Besseno, and we created it specially for that event. They asked us a live for an external area, a lawn. We produced Punto Zero as a performance for lights and multichannel sounds. There are six sonorous fonts, twelve strobe

lamps and twelve headlights disposed in circle, quite a complex hybrid system of lights, planned by Tonylight and Peppolasagna. This circle lightens the area outside the circumference, the environment. While the sonorous part is directed to the interior. The observers are at the centre.

Mud: this project is in hexaphony, with linked strongly to the landscape, a sign on environment. Punto Zero is a source point: during the performance we want to give the sensation to be at the hub of the earth. The ideal conditions would be of absolute darkness. We saw, for example, that the effects of light on the wood. A

strong symbolic strength originates, the live is quite a sign of landscape-art.

Xo00: In Porto Beseno there were some elements of the landscape, mountains, trees, high-voltage wires, that were illuminated by the circle, and the show was done by the landscape itself.

Mud: Besides, the live was very amazing, a hexaphonic projection submerged by the landscape. It is astonishing to see how your endurance threshold is higher in an open space, because you can linger on sounds.



Photo by Arianna D'Angelica

Suddenly the bell rings and Marco Mancuso introduces himself into the lab. The studio has always been a meeting point for friends and artists passing by the city. He waits for the end of the interview, and then he is looking forward to make otolab a question.

Marco Mancuso: I think the creation of architectural and audiovisual atmospheres in space, starting from the architects' experience in otolab, is still one of the collective's potentialities partially expressed. Could the change from the pure live media to the two-dimensional projection and mere work in relation to a space, innovate otolab in order to interact and confront in a tridimensional perspective?

Xo00: Yes, we wish to develop such

works but it could be complicated: it's a kind of site specific projects involving a series of production problems. The projection we presented at Dissonanze festival included this sort of research. We were asked a vjset for the terrace of the Palazzo dei Congressi in Rome. It wasn't neither an installation nor a live, yet we managed to use that space. We decided to give the projection a horizontal perspective by using two screens and trying to enhance the front of the palace. Thanks to our architect Dies_, we changed the architecture of the building with graphic shapes. As the video goes, the marble tables that compose the wall seem to open and rotate. This work entitled Shadow Play emphasized the gaps between the lives during the soirée. This created some sort of interaction between the observer and the architecture, some installations as the vjset went on. At last, we would like to create new audiovisual or interactive scenography for the theatre. We would like to contribute to the planning of a theatrical project.

www.otolab.net

Biological Strategies At The Service Of Design

Carla Langella



With the definition of “hybrid design”, a project planning approach is intended so that it may borrow the complexities embedded in the logic, in the codes and the principles of the biological world and insert these into the culture of the project itself. In hybrid design the complex qualities drawn from the biological world are transferred to the design of products and innovative services as if it were a sort of “new genetic code”.

To obtain this objective the most recent achievements in biological science and their correlated theoretical speculations are taken as a reference point, with the will to overcome the common basis of aesthetical and formal metaphors and face a more difficult path of scientific substance, based on a specific methodology put into use and verified

through theoretical and planned research.

The current biological knowledge has revealed that biological systems don't always function in an “exact” way, but rather it is their complexity that allows them to survive despite changes in external or internal conditions. These complexities are borrowed by Hybrid Design through the transferral of biological strategies into design itself, in order to “un-reveal” new fields of conceptual and operative experimentation.



Cycles of Nature

To adopt codes, principles and logic drawn from biology into design means not only to be inspired by how nature creates its products, but most

of all how it develops them, makes them grow and keeps them alive. In this way there is an evolution of the bio-inspired planned paradigm that is no longer based on the question: “how does nature develop biological systems” but adds: “how does nature make them grow and keep them alive?”.

From the answer to these questions the main principles targeted at the closure of the cycles of useful resources for the design and the development of artefacts compatible with biological cycles can be drawn, which regulate the lives of men and the natural environment in a zero emission or cradle to cradle view. The concept of a cycle is actually connected to that of a biological time cycle. Natural processes happen in cycles, the refusals of certain systems become resources for others. The durability of materials must be in proportion to the durability of the life of the products where they are used. To learn to design projects in nature also means to learn how to apply cycle patterns that are closed and belong to biological processes.

There is a substantial difference between the way man produces and the way nature produces. Man develops his own artefacts, takes primary materials from nature and transforms them in order to obtain products that, when their function has

terminated, become waste, mostly unusable waste that accumulates in the environment and damages it.

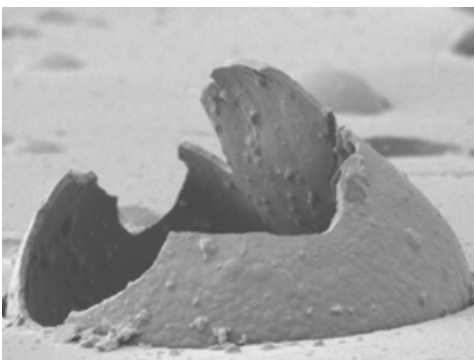


Nature, on the other hand, takes primary materials, transforms them and creates its own products that grow, reproduce and at the end of their life return to biological cycles and are integrated into them. In nature everything is reused and recycled. According to the biological metaphors used by bio-inspired design, every product, or system of products, can be compared to an organism where every part, even if with different life cycles, is connected to each other through complex relationships. Often the different components of a product are characterised by their different durability and different obsolescence times. The choice of materials to be used and the eventual ad hoc design of some of these must, therefore, keep in mind the necessity to prepare for the different technical elements

connected to different life cycles.

In prefiguring these cycles it is necessary to dedicate the utmost attention to their environmental impact and their durability, which must be compatible with the estimate, in relation to their specificity in their appliance. In particular, it is indispensable to pre-evaluate the environmental performance of all the materials and components in the phases that come straight after their dismissal, such as re-usage, recycling and new possible cycles of life.

The attention toward temporal cycles of material induces the use of recyclable materials, which come from renewable primary materials or biodegradable materials that can be composted, for products that have very short life cycles, like packaging systems or so-called “disposable” products, like the “moscardino” developed by Matteo Ragni and Giulio Iachetti for Pandora Design. In these cases the capacity that the material has in being disposed into the environment avoids increasing volumes of solid deposited waste.



Autonomy

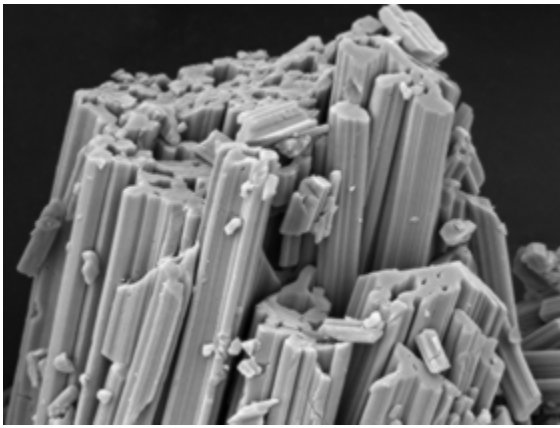
In design the concept of autonomy can be interpreted and transferred as an autonomy from maintenance operations, from cleaning, restoration and substitution, which are precious qualities as they avoid the environmental impacts connected to them. Main principles targeted toward the autonomy of artefacts can be drawn from biological systems throughout their life cycle in energy terms, and at the end of the cycles and resources. Environmentally-friendly design can learn from nature: for example, the most adapt strategies in order to use renewable energy resources, or to recycle un-renewable energy resources, to reuse waste products, up until the most complex strategies such as those based on the capacity of self-monitoring or self-healing.

Many biological systems are capable of modifying their own characteristics in function of the change in external factors, so that they may survive despite such changes. This is what happens in the phenomenon of self-healing many plants and animals posses. In living organisms, for example, a wound generates a self-healing mechanism.

In the human body, when a wound is

inflicted, there is an immediate flux of liquids corresponding to the direct area of the body involved, that activates a series of physical reactions capable of closing up the wound. By using analogous strategies, some researchers from the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology from the University of Illinois, coordinated by Scott White, have developed “self-healing polymers”, composite polymers capable of repairing themselves (1), that could be used, wherever there is a small rupture, in the design of various types or products in order to

avoid the entire substitution or dismissal of the whole damaged object. Microcapsules are integrated into these composites that open and release a resin that instantly polymerises the rupture and closes the fracture in the matrix (2). The research in the field of new materials and the evolution of new production technologies offer increasing opportunities in terms of energy autonomy like photovoltaic technologies in very fine and flexible films, that allow for the autonomy of electrical appliances of all shapes and sizes.



Self-organization and adaptation.

The concept of self-organisation has crossed many disciplines and so has adopted various definitions. According to complexity theorists, self-organisation seems to be one of the most important principles in the capacity for evolution, as it is translated into a capacity to generate potentially successful structures in the natural selection. The systems capable of organising themselves spontaneously increase their own probability of further evolution. The self-organised characteristics are also more easily remodelled, and so are more flexible. In order to survive the change in external or internal conditions, organisms tend to modify themselves and evolve over time, so that they may use their own resources in the most efficient way possible. The concept of self-organisation has been transferred onto various disciplinary fields.

In design, the transferral of concepts of self-organisation and adaptability onto artefacts means to intervene and make the relationship between the essence of the material and its performance more complex. The adaptability of a product can be intended as the capacity to modify its own characteristics according to the mutation of external conditions, so it could be translated as a flexibility of performance or multi-functionality. The French designer Mathieu Lehanneur, who obtained the Carte Blanche VIA 2006 by designing the “Elements” collection, made up of elements for the home, capable of self-adapting dynamically to the variations of external conditions, in order to create comfortable conditions. Objects that modify their performance in relation to stimuli from their use or from the environment.

The concept of self-organisation is important from the point of view of being eco-friendly in terms of saving material and energy resources. A system is made to be adaptable by forecasting possible changes that it must adapt to, even if this regards a mere part of it. In this way it is possible to extend the useful life of a product considerably. Design products must therefore be adaptable and upgradable in relation to the variations of the technological scenarios, of the economical

environment and the conditions and user requirements. The planned and developed objects must be flexible, modular and reconfigurable be it from a performance point of view to a dimensional and aesthetical point of view; these are more likely to last longer and therefore can be used for a longer period of time and so gain a considerable environmental advantage connected to saving material and energy resources necessary for its maintenance or substitution for the longest time possible.



The Holographic Principle

The holographic principle of complexity, which living organisms are based on, foresees that: not only is a part a fraction of the whole, but the whole is included in that part (3). The cell, for example, is part of the organism, which also contains the genetic information of the whole.

Based on the biological metaphor, the

artefacts can be interpreted as organisms, where each part, each element, participates in a global planning strategy extended to infinite levels that go from nanometres to macro-metres.

Hybrid design adopts a bio-mimetic metaphor, where in the design of artefacts these are considered as organisms, where each element, according to the holographic principle, to all the scales, from those of the materials to the macroscopic ones, participate in a common global concept. In the design field for eco-friendly products, this approach can offer a methodological structure where eco-friendly and bio-inspired strategies are reflected in all the dimensions and all the phases of the life cycle of the product, as a sort of “genetic code” capable of creating a system coherence for the project which can be very useful in obtaining the best possible result in terms of minimisation of environmental impact.



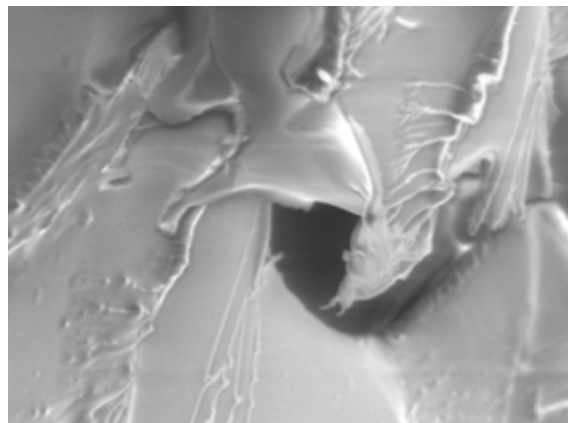
Redundancy and Multi-functionality

Biological systems possess a quality defined as “redundancy”, which allows them to survive despite the most unpredictable and dangerous events, responding to these through the use of elements or characteristics that are apparently “superfluous”, whose existence proves vital only when there is a necessity for them. Often design strategies oriented toward environmentally friendly products tend toward a certain minimisation. The concept of redundancy seems therefore to be the antithesis of this kind of approach. But in some cases, redundancy constitutes an efficient solution in order to avoid wasting resources. For example, the use of protective films applied to highly perishable surfaces or surfaces that are in constant use, like flooring in places where there is the frequent passage of people or equipment, make the conservation of components or parts of buildings last longer, which would otherwise require continuous replacement with consequential environmental relapses.

Redundancy can also be functional. In nature the majority of elements are multifunctional because the environmental conditions change from moment to moment and the

biological systems must be ready to respond with one of their possible functions. Some insects, for example, have different pairs of legs; each one has a different function. Multi-functionality is a consolidated tendency in contemporary design, life rhythms are increasingly frenetic and their constant changes require that products for daily use be transformable, mutable, capable of adapting to changes in necessities and external conditions.

Multi-functional or redundant objects and components can adapt more easily to different applications from the point of view of performance, and therefore are capable of “surviving” for longer.



Devices that incorporate different functions like electro-chromic glass, that combine glass and sun screen in one unique object, or electroluminescent and photoluminescent materials that combine

different elements necessary to create a lamp such as a light source, electrical cables, switches, stand and diffusers in one material system.

To integrate functions into one unique product means to save, in economical terms as well as environmental terms, material and energy resources necessary to create the different products that are to be substituted.

Notes

(1) S.R. White, N.R. Sottos, P.H. Geubelle, J.S. Moore, M.R. Kessler, S.R. Sriram, E.N. Brown, S. Viswanathan: "Autonomic healing of polymer composites", *Nature*. 2001 409, 794-797.

(2) Brown, E.N., White, S.R. and Sottos, N.R. "Retardation and repair of fatigue cracks in a microcapsule toughened epoxy composite-Part II: In situ self-healing". *Composite Science and Technology*, Special Anniversary Issue. 2005: 65, 2474-2480.

(3) Morin E., Le Moigne J.L. (1999).

*L'Intelligence de la Complexité .
L'Harmattan. Paris.*

Graphic Design With Momomaker

Silvia Bianchi



MOMO is an artist whose work is not easy to catalogue. Defining it as a street artist would be boring and reduced. His life and his adventures are surprising as his experiments and they don't deserve being limited within no definition.

Disembarked from Brooklyn after several years of wandering, they've seen him moving in Jamaica, Spain, New Orleans, Key West, Taos, Georgia and North Carolina, living in tents, caverns and barracks. MOMO is a Californian artist, for this reason the labels are useless. His essential and at the same time original and coloristic style makes his works recognizable at first sight.

Curious and relentless, he has experimented all in its path, from

writing in poster art to realistic picturing in digital art. In 2006, he has tagged the entire length of Manhattan by a MOMO label of two miles and with Eltono installed a series of mechanic sculptures on the beaches and water of Manhattan, filled the city with the covers of New Yorker, constructed a sculpture of spandex for the Spring Street Show and coloured the streets of many world cities with his collages. Momo has exhibited his work in New York, Seoul, Cologne, Manchester, New Orleans and collaborates in a stable manner with artists such as Melissa Brown, Jimmy Debuffet and Eltono and which affirms his inspirational source as Sam3, Influenza, Zosen, Sonik and Blu.

A strong tie connects him to Madrid, where we have interviewed him in the occasion of his **Underwater exposition in which he presented the latest evolution of the MOMOMAKER**, a web page which is also a mini software that plays with graphics, randomly binding a series of geometric forms together and giving light to a series of experiments which take absolutely unconventional form in serigraphy.



Silvia Bianchi: First of all where and when was born MOMO?

MOMO: In the San Francisco Bay, California, in the mid 70 s.

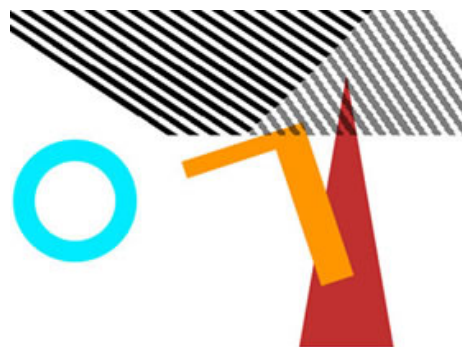
Silvia Bianchi: Your style is so clear that in the same time it's so complete, it seems as a result of coloristic balancing and plastic rhythm. Is it a result of a stylistic progress starting from realism?

MOMO: Progress! sure. I spent the first 15 years of my life learning to draw and paint well. I some of that seems like a waste, except its great to practice looking and studying. Now I'm chasing experiments that I believe continue to look farther.

Silvia Bianchi: How the metropolitan context and support influence your work? I've read that in order to realize the MOMOMAKER you've started from observation of the scratchings. Can you explain exactly how the idea was born?

MOMO: It began as a joke, just to say a computer was making my artwork, and I can relax. But it became true, I'd discovered a tool, and I'm still interested in it a year and a half later. The MOMO Maker combines elements randomly and they look good or they don't. Generally a design is exciting when there are dynamic contrasts between elements. There becomes a little story of what happens when, for example; hard enters soft, lite covers heavy, heavy rests uneasily on sharp, etc.

One day I recognized that graffiti over graffiti has this special need to make dynamic contrast, to be seen at all. That idea really blew me away. You see it best in scratchiti because its all transparent (on glass). Thick lines might overcome thin, Straight over graceful, jagged over straight, etc. So the the same thing is at work- and what is that? Vandalism is only vandalism, when its *different* than what was there (you can't vandalize anything with *more* of the same). This appears to be everywhere really. In a spiritual sense I'm taking on faith that its natural and beautiful.

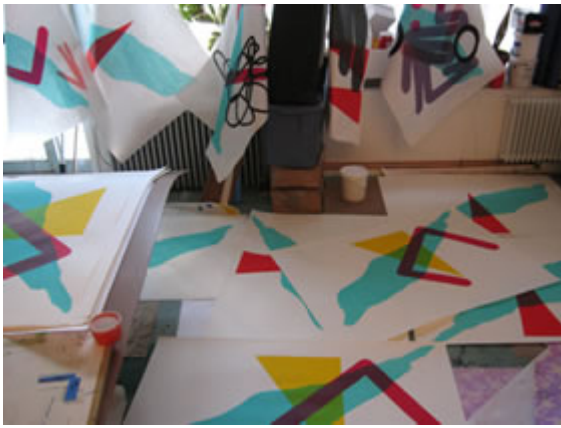


Silvia Bianchi: I am very interested in the type of technique, which you use to print your designs. Are your printings, serigraphy? or do you use an overhead projector aren't you?

MOMO: When printing very large posters I cut black paper for the shapes. The serigraph comes directly from the shadow of the scissor cut paper. For the latest series I printed the forms from photoshop onto transparency to make the shadow (that's the normal serigraph process). I wanted it directly from the computer files so we can say the 'Maker animation performed a real

test of possibilities, before ink hit the paper. In the past there are so many handmade variations in the printing, that you could only say the "Maker was inspiration.

So the squeegee leaves an unpredictable part to the result? For this latest project there's 3 shapes per design, and 27 shapes: 19,683 possibilities. I printed just 1000 of them (well 1300, to discard the worst and doubles). So there was randomness of "1000 within 19683 . I certainly had not seen most of the artwork I was going to create before it happened. I didn't think of it, it was discovered (!).



Silvia Bianchi: Would you describe us the various phases of your work?

MOMO: Pretty basic – catalogue favorite shapes and colors. Use several java script random slide shows on top of each other (on

layers) to combine your favorites. Watch. Change things that don't work, like the order on layers, position, proportions of large to small, filled to half filled. Now make your seriograph. I have my own interests and rules for what I'm looking for – such as; each shape should try to be as much itself as possible. Once I find them, the shapes don't change like swirling 80 s patterns (of floating geometric bits & triangles) only the contrasts change. Colors, positions, orientations, and sizes for each shape is pursued seriously, so I find it and keep it. But that's just me. I think this multi-slide show MOMO Maker could have other applications for other users.

I very much want to work with someone that writes code for real, to write the easiest cleanest version of the online 'Maker. There's three or four scripts that I've used, but none do it all.

Silvia Bianchi: You've approached various means of expression in your work: from sculpture to drawing until aerosol. The MOMO maker is the first of u're works to involve the use of computer in your art?

MOMO: That's true. I use photoshop like a sketch pad all the time. Edit videos, create clunky caveman-skill-level html pages for my website. But I guess everyone does that, I don't have a special skill for it. But I do have an appetite; when I created <http://momoshowpalace.com/EMPM3.html> I felt it was the best work of art I'd ever made. Or maybe <http://momoshowpalace.com/EM1.html> was well, <http://momoshowpalace.com/emtry5.html> definitely try too.



Silvia Bianchi: I am very fascinated by seeing that the use of computer in your work is very instrumental and not substantial. Your work is very analogical and seems like organic but at the same time it has something digital. It's as if you had organized a graphics of digital origin valuing the part of unexpected result, which we graphic designers are not used to seeing. Can we say that for you're the computer is an aid?

MOMO: I actually went to college for "computer art" – isn't that funny? I was extremely interested but then turned off at the same time. I dropped out after a year. I guessed I could spend 3 years learning something that would become obsolete, or I could learn core art stuff, and apply it when computers became easier to use. Of course that was 95, and immediately I missed the internet bubble that was forming, and all the money and rock and roll (I really fucked up haha). In the fine art sense artists occasionally receive attention for demonstrating new technology, but of course it's better to chase something substantive. You don't want to lose the forest in the trees. I think the MOMO Maker is a really fun invention, but like most tech, I'm half in, half out. You could do these experiments other ways, it's just faster and reliable and accessible like this

Silvia Bianchi: At Subaquatica you have exhibited 1000-printed serigraphy made by the MOMOMAKER, underwater. Do you have any ideas of how to present the project in the future?

MOMO: Yeah, every time I try to finish the MOMO Maker project, I end up with more questions. I'd like to experiment *one* more time, with 3-d looking shapes and shadows. That will have to wait, until maybe next year, I'm booked already for a while.



Silvia Bianchi: What are the next projects, which you will work on?

MOMO: I can't mention most of these things. Some are not 100% certain, but I hope to travel to a handful of countries this year, making video based street experiments, I'll have a show with Rojo in Barcelona in June, Something with Paper Monster in April, I'm really into zines (if I can find anytime). I hope to work with some friends of mine on things, some

experiments and jokes in NYC. Right now I'm working my day job in Hawaii while it snows in NY. That's a project called survival (!), I hope to do some 5 day sailing off Key West Florida with a friend who built his own sailboat!.

<http://momoshowpalace.com/momo>

[maker.html](#)

<http://momoshowpalace.com/TheNewYorker.htm>

<http://blog.anonymousgallery.com/underground/>

<http://momoshowpalace.com/+BigVIDEO.htm>

www.subaquatica.com

Trevor Wishart: Chemistry Of Sound

Matteo Milani



Trevor Wishart, born 1946 in Leeds, is a composer and performer who developed (not only) sound transformation tools in his Sound Loom – Composers’ Desktop Project software package. He’s the author of the worldwide-known books ‘On Sonic Art’ and ‘Audible Design’, where he shares his extensive research on extended human voice and computer music techniques for sound morphing. He is currently ‘Arts Council Composer Fellow’ in the Department of Music at Durham University, England.

Developed computer sound morphing techniques for IRCAM commission Vox 5, for ‘supervoice’ in sound-surround, proposed in 1979, made in ’86. Subsequently developed large numbers of sound transformation software instruments working

through the *Composers Desktop Project*. These are utilised to the full in *Tongues of Fire* (1993-4: Golden Nica, Ars Electronica, 1995). All these processes are described in the book *Audible Design* and made available on the Sound Loom

In the book *On Sonic Art*, Trevor Wishart discussed new musical possibilities offered by these tools, and developed notion of a sophisticated art of sound, or Sonic Art. He writes: “In the past, the quality or nature of sounds used in music was set by the technology of instrument design, and conventions about performance and musical ‘expression’. In the 19th century, european composers became increasingly concerned with ‘sonority’, through development of new orchestration techniques, and new instruments. However, a *systematic* approach to *sound itself* had to wait for the invention of sound recording and the accurate computer analysis of sounds. Studios, and then computers, also provided powerful new tools for musicians to work directly with sound.”

U.S.O. Project had the pleasure of interviewing Trevor Wishart, whom

work has been recently awarded at the 'Giga-Hertz-Award for electronic music 2008'. The 'Grand Prize' honored his artistic and technical achievements along his career.



USO: You've been awarded at the Bourges Festival, at Ars Electronica and now at Giga-Hertz, three prestigious prizes for electronic music. How are your feelings now for all these tributes about your life work as composer?

Trevor Wishart: It's very gratifying to receive this kind of recognition from the musical community, especially as the type of music I make is almost invisible in the cultural press in the UK, where electro-acoustic composition is squeezed out between classical instrumental music and popular music.

USO: How did you begin being interested in music composition?

Trevor Wishart: I was brought up in a

working class household, with no real connection with the world of concerts, or theatres, but there was a piano in the house, a family heirloom, which no-one ever played. I became fascinated by it, and so my parents agreed to let me have piano lessons. A little later, when I was 7, I was looking in the window of the only classical music shop in town when I noticed a strange book, a musical score with no notes on it (it was a manuscript book). I immediately bought one and began to write my own music.



USO: Did you choose the electronic medium and how has this affected your way of composing?

Trevor Wishart: I went to university to study Chemistry (my parents could not imagine music as a real job - my school advised me against pursuing this 'dilettantism') but soon changed to music. After being thrown into the deep end of Darmstadt by my college tutor at Oxford, I was writing complex

instrumental music (7 tone rows with different intervallic structures + random number tables) when my father died. He worked in a factory in Leeds, and I suddenly felt my sense of disconnectedness from his world. So I bought the only tape-recorder I could afford (it ran at 3+3/4 inches per second and had a built in poor-quality mike) and went around factories and power-stations in Nottingham and Leeds, recording the sounds of industrial machinery, with some vague notion of making a piece for him. In the studio I discovered that many of my presumptions about composition were challenged in this new medium. Sounds had a life of their own which had to be respected. Preconceived absolute notions of musical proportions and musical relationships were challenged by the concrete reality of the sounds themselves. After two large early projects ('Machine' and 'Journey-int-Space') I settled on a way of working with complex materials based on the idea of sound-transformation, in the work 'Red Bird'.

'Red Bird' treats its real-world sounds (birds, animals, voices, machines) as metaphors in a mythical landscape, one sound type transforming into another to create a form somewhere between music and mythic narrative. In fact the approach was suggested by reading Levi Strauss's 'The Raw and the Cooked', where he uses music as a

kind of metaphor for his structural anthropological approach to myth. My idea was to turn this on its head and create a contemporary myth (about industrialism, determinism, 'freedom' and creativity) using sound and musical structure. The sound-transformation approach (very difficult to achieve in the analogue studio) was thus partly inspired by a political idea the possibility of changing the social world. With the advent of computers, very precise control of sound structure made it possible to adopt sound-transformation as a general approach to musical materials. I think of this as a generalization of the classical ideas of variation and development, extended into the entire spectral domain.



USO: You prefer using samples generated from vocal sources performed by you with extended techniques. Could you describe the creation process?

Trevor Wishart: Not strictly. I very often use the human voice (sometimes my own, sometimes live performers like 'Electric Phoenix' or 'Singcircle', sometimes voices from the media, or from the local community), for two reasons. On the one hand the voice is much more than a musical instrument. Through speech it connects us to the social world, and thence to the traditions of poetry, drama, comedy, etc. It reveals much about the speaker, from gender, age and health to attitude, mood and intention, and it also connects us with our Primate relatives. The listener recognizes a voice even when it is minimally indicated, or vastly transformed, just as we recognize faces from very few cues. And the average listener will be affected by e.g. a vocal multiphonic, an immediate empathic or guttural link, in a way which they will not be affected by a clarinet multiphonic (appreciate more in the sphere of contemporary music aficionados). At the same time, apart from the computer itself, the voice is the richest sound-producing 'instrument' that we have, generating a vast variety of sounds from the stably pitched, to the entirely noisy, to complex rapidly-changing multiphonics or textures of grit and so on. This is a rich seam to mine for musical exploration.

USO: Could you describe your musical

production system?

Trevor Wishart: My musical creation process depends on the particular work. Normally I have a general idea (a 'poetic') for the work. For example, 'Imago' has the idea of surprising events arising from unlikely origins (just like the imago stage of insect metamorphosis, the butterfly, emerges from the unprepossessing pupa). For 'Globalalia' the idea is to express the connectedness of human beings by exploring the fundamental elements of all languages, the syllables. I also have some general notions of how musical forms work clearly stating the principal materials is important for the listener in a context where a traditional musical language is not being used; establishing key moments or climaxes in the work; repetition and development, and recapitulation of materials, especially leading towards and away from these foci, and so on. Repetition and (possibly transformed) recapitulation are especially important to the listener to chart a path through an extended musical form. But all sound materials are different, and it is not possible to predict, except in the most obvious ways, what will arise when one begins to transform the sounds. So I spend a lot of time, exploring, playing with, the sources, transforming them, and transforming the transformations, and gradually a formal scheme

appropriate to what I discover, and to those particular materials, crystallizes in the studio.



USO: How was your experience working at IRCAM for “Vox 5” ?

Trevor Wishart: My first visit to IRCAM was the most exciting learning experience of my life. Discovering the possibilities opened up by the analysis and transformation of sounds using software, learning about psycho-acoustics in Steve McAdams inspiring lectures, and mingling with high-powered researchers bursting with new ideas. As you probably know, I was offered the opportunity to make a piece during my 1981 visit, but then the entire hardware base of IRCAM changed and it was not until 1986 that I could actually begin work on ‘VOX- 5’, a piece growing out of the experience of ‘Red Bird’. I was assigned a mentor (Thierry Lancino), but he soon realized that I could probably manage on my own (my

science background at school meant that programming came naturally to me), and I soon discovered the Phase Vocoder, taking apart the data files to discover what was in them, and using this knowledge to begin designing sound-morphing tools based on the transformation of that data.

USO: You have been involved in software developing for several years. Why did you choose to shape your own tools? Can you tell us about the genesis and the actual development of the Composer Desktop Project?

Trevor Wishart: There are two main reasons. The first is poverty (!). Most of my life I’ve been a freelance composer, and being a freelance experimental composer in England is seriously difficult! When I first worked with electronics you were dependent on custom-built black boxes like the SPX90. The problem for me was, even if I could afford to buy one of these, I could not afford to upgrade every other year, as University music departments could. It became clear that the solution to this would be to have IRCAM-like software running on a desktop computer. A group of like-minded composers and engineers in York got together (in 1985-6) as the Composers’ Desktop Project, and began porting some of the IRCAM/Stanford software to the Atari ST (The MAC was, then, too slow for professional audio). We then began to

design our own software. The second reason is that creating one's own instruments means you can follow your sonic imagination wherever it leads, rather than being restricted by the limitations of commercially-focused software. You can develop or extend an instrument when you feel the need to (not when the commercial producer decides it's profitable to do so), and you can fix it if it goes wrong!



USO: Can you tell us the Composers' Desktop Project genesis?

Trevor Wishart: The original ports onto the Atari ran very slowly: e.g. doing a spectral transformation of a 4 second stereo sound might take 4 minutes at IRCAM, but took 2 days on the Atari. However, on your own system at home, you could afford to wait certainly easier than attempting to gain access to the big institutions every time you wanted to make a piece. Gradually PCs got faster even IRCAM moved onto MACs. The CDP

graduated onto the PC (MACs were too expensive for freelancers!) and the software gradually got faster than realtime. The CDP has always been a listening-based system, and I was resistant for a long time to creating any graphic interface much commercial software had a glamorous-looking interface hiding limited musical possibilities. However, in the mid-90s I eventually developed the 'Sound Loom' in TK/Tcl. (This language was particularly helpful as it meant the interface could be developed without changing the underlying sound-processing programs). The advantages of the interface soon became apparent, particularly its ability to store an endless history of musical activities, save parameter patches, and create multi-processes (called 'Instruments'). More recently I've added tools to manage large numbers of files. 'Bulk Processing' allows hundreds of files to be submitted to the same process, while 'Property Files' allow user-defined properties and values to be assigned to sounds, and sounds can then be selected on the basis of those properties. There are more and more high level functions which combine various CDP processes to achieve higher-level functionality.

USO: How did you develop your skills in programming algorithms for the spectral domain?

Trevor Wishart: I studied science and maths at school, and did one term of university maths (for chemists). Mathematics has always been one of my hobbies it's beautiful, like music. When I was 15, my school organized a visit to the local (Leeds) university computer, a vast and mysterious beast hidden in an air-conditioned room from where it was fed by punched-card readers. I wrote my first Algol programs then. I only took up programming later, as a student at York, when Clive Sinclair brought out his first ultra-cheap home computer. I taught myself Basic, graduated to the other Sinclair machines, up to the final 'QL' which I used to control the sound-spatialisation used in VOX-1. Later I graduated to C. Martin Atkins, who designed the CDP's sound-system, and Miller Puckette at IRCAM, from whom I picked up some useful advice but I'm still only a gifted amateur when it comes to programming!



USO: Could you explain us your preference for offline processing software instead of real-time environments?

Trevor Wishart: Offline and realtime work are different both from a programming and from a musical perspective. The principal thing you don't have to deal with in offline work, is getting the processing done in a specific time. The program must be efficient and fast, and understand timing issues. Offline all this is simply irrelevant. Offline also, you can take your time to produce a sound-result e.g. a process might consult the entire sound and make some decisions about what to do, run a 2nd process, and on the basis of this run a third and so on. As machines get faster and programmers get cleverer (and if composers are happy for sounds to be processed off-line and re-injected into the system later) then you can probably get round most of these problems.

But the main difference is aesthetic. If you're processing a live-event, you have to accept whatever comes in the mike or input device. However precise the score, the sounds coming in will always be subtly different on each performance. So the processes you use have to work with a range of potential inputs. The main problem with live music, is you have to be the sort of person who likes going to

concerts, or is happy in the social milieu of the concert. And many people are not. This can be changed through, on the one hand, education, but, more significantly, by making the concert world more friendly to more groups of people, and e.g. taking performances to unusual venues (I've performed in working mens' clubs, schools, and so on).

Working offline you can work with the unique characteristics of a particular sound it may be a multiphonic you managed to generate in an improvising session but is not simply 'reproducible' at will, or it may be the recording of a transient event, or a specific individual, that cannot be reproduced at will in a performance. Moreover, the absence of performers on stage might seem like a weakness, but it has its own rewards. Compare theatre and film. A live performance has obvious strengths a contact with living musicians, the theatre of the stage etc, but you're always definitely there in the concert-hall. In the pure electro-acoustic event we can create a dream-world which might be realistic, abstract, surreal or all these things at different times a theatre of the ears where we can be transported away from the here and now into a world of dreams. Electro-acoustic music is no different to cinema in the respect of its repeatability, except that sound-diffusion, in the hands of a skilled diffuser, can make each

performance unique, an interaction with the audience, the concert situation and the acoustics of the space. Divorcing the music from the immediacy of a concert stage allows us to explore imaginary worlds, conjured in sound, beyond the social conventions of the concert hall.



USO: What are your thoughts about the spatialisation issue?

Trevor Wishart: In the 70 s I worked in an analogue 4-track. But then the 4-track technology died. Since then I have been cautious about using any spatialisation procedure beyond stereo, as I don't want my work to be dependent on a technology which might not last. I'm also concerned with the average listener, who will not go to a concert, or a special institution with complex spatialisation facilities. Most people will listen to music on headphones or domestic hifis. So the music must work in this context. With diffusion, however, I can expand the

stereo work, using the diffusion process to reinforce and expand the gestures within the music. My current piece will probably be in 8-tracks, partly for aesthetic reasons, – it is based on recognizable human speech, and I would like the speech ‘community’ to surround the audience and partly because 8-track is, perhaps, future-proof, being essentially 4 times stereo! I’m excited by the multichannel spatialisation systems being developed at the moment, but I would like to see the development of very cheap, high quality loudspeakers, to make these technologies accessible to smaller (normal) venues, and to composers like me, who work at home.

USO: How should your music be performed (by you or any other sound artist) in live context?

Trevor Wishart: With the pure electro-acoustic works, the (stereo) pieces should be diffused over many stereo pairs. I provide basic diffusion scores if I am not diffusing the pieces myself.



USO: What do you think about the structural approach in music composition? Do you think it could be helpful to shape tools for computer aided composition in order to speed up the composer’s work?

Trevor Wishart: Absolutely essential, there is no music without structure. But computer-aided composition is something for commercial music and film, where we don’t want to stray from known pathways, so we’re happy to encapsulate those in an algorithm. For art music, I want to hear how another person shapes materials in order to bring me a musical experience. I’m not interested in hearing the output of an algorithm, though, of course, algorithms might be used on a small scale to help shape particular events.

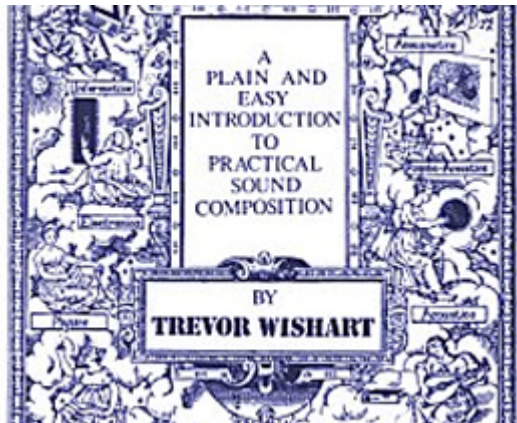
USO: Is your academic career helped you to expand your knowledge about your way of composing?

Trevor Wishart: Yes. Because I was studying Chemistry at Oxford, when I changed subject to Music it was into one of the most conservative music departments in the UK, But I’m glad I was therefore brought into contact with music from the middle ages to the early 1900s and taught about the many different approaches composers have taken to organizing

their materials, over hundreds of years

USO: In your music is there any technical or inspirational reference to composers of the past?

Trevor Wishart: I don't think so. OS, should I say, not yet .



USO: What are your near future projects?

Trevor Wishart: My present project, a 3 year residency, involves recording the speaking voices of many people across the community in the North East of England. I have recorded in schools, old peoples' centres, pubs

and homes. I wish to capture people speaking naturally, and to collect together a diverse range of vocal types – different ages, from 4 to 93, gender, and sheer vocal quality. My intention is to make an electro-acoustic piece of about one hour, in 4 'acts', which plays on both the uniqueness of each speaker, and on the common features of the voice we all share. The piece must be comprehensible to the local community, particularly to those people whose voices I recorded (few of whom have any special interest in experimental music!), but also to an international concert audience, where I cannot assume that the listeners will understand English.

www.trevorwishart.co.uk

www.giga-hertz.de

www.dur.ac.uk/music

www.composersdesktop.com

Generative Nature

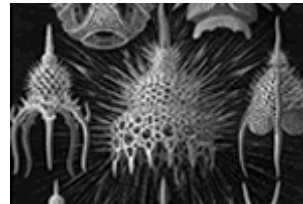
Marco Mancuso



In his De Rerum Natura, Lucretius denies any kind of creation, providence and original bliss and maintains that people freed themselves from their condition of need thanks to the production of techniques, which are transpositions of nature. A god and some gods exist, but they did not create the universe, nor they deal with people's actions. Lucretius maintains that the rational knowledge of nature shows us an infinite universe that is made up of complex forms and constituted by atoms; it follows natural laws, it is indifferent to people's needs and can be explained without gods.

When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine

that makes the art. Sol Le Witt



Modern ecology began with Charles Darwin's studies; in his "theory of evolution", published in 1859 in *On the Origin of Species*, he underlined the adaptation of the different organisms to the various kinds of environment, which are subjected to the age-long examination of natural selection.

However, the word was coined by Ernst Heinrich Haeckel in 1869 and comes from the Greek *óikos* meaning "house" and *logos* meaning "discourse": it is therefore a biological science that studies environment and the relationships that the different living organisms establish between each other and with the environment itself. For some time, Haeckel was a strong supporter and popularizer of Darwin's theories, but he soon became one of his most bitter enemies; he firmly refuted the process of natural selection as the basis of the evolutionary mechanism,

in favour of a thought that was more focused on the environment as a direct agent on natural organisms, which is able to produce new species and generate diversity.

Ernst Heinrich Haeckel's thought and work represent the starting point of this critical reflection: first of all, because it was the theoretical and practical cue suggested by Bruce Sterling during his workshop for Fabrica, to which the text refers; secondly, because it allows me a philosophical and critical reflection aspiring to find a possible point of contact between nature, theories of evolution and programmatic and generative art. Is it impossible? Well, I would say no, on the contrary. Above all if we try to compare and amalgamate, like the colours on a canvas, the German biologist's research on one side with some works of conceptual and minimalist artist Sol Le Witt and the possible relationship between mathematics and nature on the other, and what is known today as art and generative design.



Nature as an art

“Kunstformen der Natur” literally means “artistic forms of nature”: this is the title of biologist Ernst Haeckel's 1898 most important text, his most complex and fascinating research. Moreover, this is the text from which Bruce Sterling took, for those participating in his workshop, some primary images that could be the graphic material and starting point for an aesthetic and methodological reflection on the practices of generative repetitiveness. By watching the richly decorated plates in Haeckel's text, it is undeniable that nature is able not only to create spontaneously real “art forms”, but also to produce a direct correspondence between a certain generative aesthetics, starting from a fundamental unit/nucleus to come to a complex entity, and a consequent adaptive and evolutionary practice.

In other words, if the stages of the embryological development of a species actually trace the evolution phases that led it to its position in the natural order, the survival of each species basically depends on its interaction with the environment. According to Haeckel, the mechanism thanks to which new species and a new diversity have origin is that of a

gradual addition of a certain development trajectory starting from an initial unit, which is determined by imposed external (environmental) parameters, which are able to influence the gradual direction of the trajectory itself.



At this point, a first important reference to the theoretic and methodological bases of Generative Art seems evident, as one of the pioneers of this discipline, Italian architect Celestino Soddu, suggests: “Generative Art is the idea realized as genetic code of artificial events, as construction of dynamic complex systems able to generate endless variations. Each Generative Project is a concept-software that works producing unique and non-repeatable events, as possible and manifold expressions of the generating idea strongly recognizable as a vision belonging to an artist/designer/musician/architect/mathematician. This generative

Idea/human-creative-act makes an unpredictable, amazing and endless expansion of human creativity. Computers are simply the tools for its storage in memory and execution. This approach opens a new era in Art, Design and Communication: the challenge of a new naturalness of the artificial event as a mirror of Nature. Once more man emulates Nature, as in the act of making Art [].”

Although, over the centuries, biologists and morphologists have widely denied a so close correspondence between ontogenesis and phylogeny, and so between unity and complexity, the germ of thought is interesting and I think it is worth continuing to nourish it .



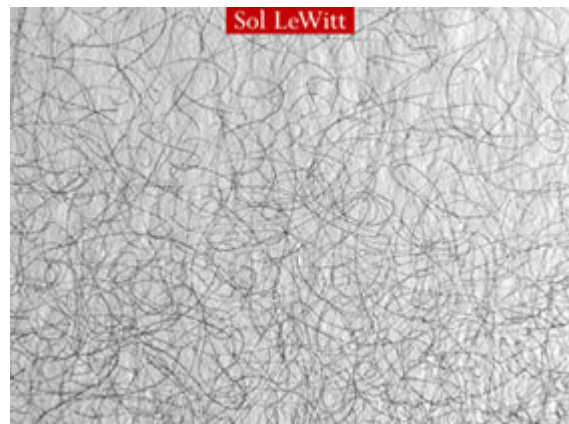
Forms, colours, line and instructions

As everybody knows, US conceptual and minimalist artist Sol Le Witt, who died not long ago, is one of the spiritual fathers of modern artists and generative designers. By reducing art

to a series of instructions thanks to which everybody is able to draw forms, colours and lines in the two-dimensional and three-dimensional space, creating geometric elements that are repeated and modulated according to standard space proportions, Le Witt loved reminding that “all the people are able to participate in the creative process, to become artists themselves”. It is well-known that the artist tended to separate the planning stage from the realization of the work; he devoted himself to the former, whereas his assistants devoted themselves to the latter: if the artistic process thus lies in the conceptual planning of the work, the (basic, elementary and geometric) execution can be carried out by everybody, thanks to a series of detailed instructions that are suggested by a thinking unit with a procedural approach. He also claimed: “ There are several ways of constructing a work of art. One is by making decisions at each step, another by making a system to make decisions. “

In this kind of approach the work of the last years of some of the most important generative artists and designers in the world (Casey Reas, Ben Fry, Jared Tarbell, Theodore Watson, Lia, Toxi, Andreas Schlegel , Marius Watz, Robert Hodgins, to mention only some of them) is reflected: if the human being

identifies himself/herself with the author of a series of mathematical instructions that can be suggested to a computer, the resulting work of art will be the sum of the operations that the computer has carried out autonomously. Therefore, as for Sol Le Witt the emotional elements of the authors, their joy at a moment, their frustration, their apathy were constituent elements of a free interpretation of the instructions that had been suggested to them and so of the resulting work of art, in the universe of digital software as well (from *Processing* to *VVVV* to *Open Frameworks* , to mention the most widespread) we can hazard the thought that the instructions given by the artist/designer can be freely interpreted by a kind of “emotiveness” of the “thinking” computer.



Le Witt’s conceptual indifference to any kind of aesthetic judgement, the aversion to prearranged aesthetic conventions that are assimilated by

the public, a general indifference to any kind of distinction between old and new are perfectly reflected in the words of one of the most important generative artists in Italy, Fabio Franchino: “In the evening I give some instructions to the computer, which processes data and autonomously generates lines, forms and colours during the night; in the morning, when I wake up, I judge the results. If I like the product I will keep it, if it is not satisfying I will throw it.”

Well, I do not know what these things suggest to you: I think that also in this case we can make a comparison with the natural universe. If we assimilate the environment, nature in its widest meaning, as the entity that is able to cause a series of changes, evolutions and dynamics, then the organisms living in contact with it (again, the concept of “ecology”) are able to interpret these vital codes, to assimilate them, in order to react to them and autonomously generate a series of forms, colours and systems that can be seen as the result of their evolutionary process, which comes to a complex final system from a starting unit. The difference maybe lies in the “spontaneity” with which this process begins: if an artist/designer decides, in advance, a series of instructions that will be given to the computer, it is difficult not to think that nature operates by following only its evolutionary spontaneity. At the same

time, it is fascinating even to think that as the artist/designer does not know the final effects of the instructions, giving the computer the freedom to interpret them, similarly nature does not care about the effects it produces on the organisms living in it, giving them evolutionary freedom of forms and elements that we, human beings, only afterwards could maybe consider as “works of art”.



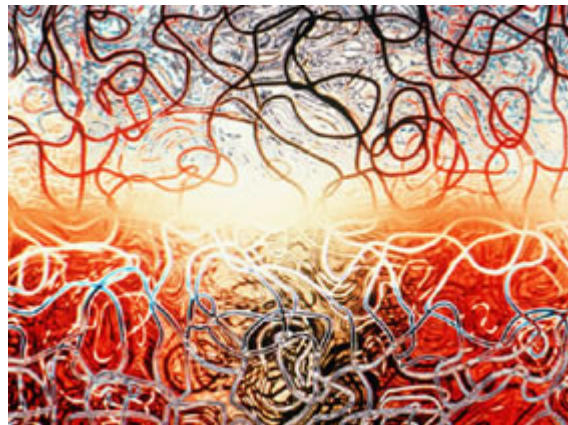
Numbers in evolution

Today, one of the most fascinating mathematical theories is undoubtedly that of fractals: according to the definition of their discoverer, Polish mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, they are geometric shapes, characterised by the endless repetition of the same pattern at ever smaller scales. This is the most intuitive definition that can be given to shapes that exist in nature in an impressive number but do not still have a precise mathematical

definition. The natural universe is rich in forms that are very similar to fractals, forms that do not follow the norms of the Euclidean geometry: a stretch of coast, the branches or the roots of a tree, a cloud, the snowflakes, the ramifications of a lightning and the dentation of a leaf are example of fractal forms originating spontaneously in nature. Among these, the fractal form par excellence is the spiral, the constituent element of the shell of many annelids and conches, which is one of the main objects of study of Ernst Heinrich Haeckel's theories and one of the most beautiful and fascinating geometric forms.

If we shift the field of analysis to mathematics, to numbers, to equations and algorithms, the level of intersection between science, technology, art and nature does not change. And if the procedural and generative method is that we have chosen as the guiding element of this treatise, it is not surprising to think that the construction of fractals follows a reiterated process, that is, the repetition of a starting element for a theoretically infinite number of times until, after a while, the human eye cannot distinguish the changes in the starting element any longer. We must not forget the fact that, as it is acknowledged, fractals are influenced by certain controlled casualness. There is thus again the element of

casualness, of spontaneity, as the distinctive (or unifying) element between computer and nature, according to which evolutionary mechanisms cannot be predicted from their constituent elements and it is often impossible to reconstruct them, starting from their visible manifestations.

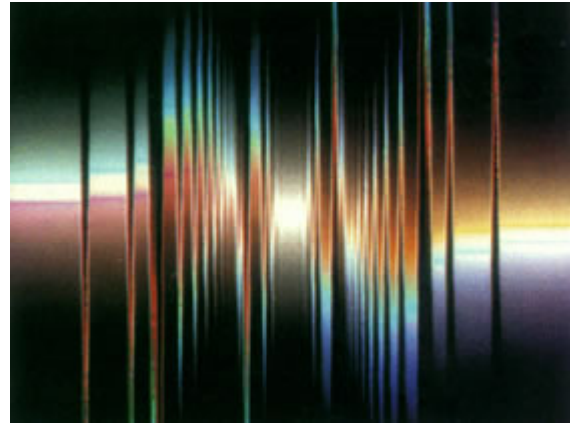


At this point of the text, the procedural, generative, iterative and evolutionary element may be considered as the pillar of the thought underpinning a modern “computational ecology”: between Turing’s revolutionary theories on “morphogenesis” (every living organism is able to develop complex bodies, starting from extremely simple elements and basing on processes of self-assembly, without the aid of a guide following a prearranged plan) and the most recent studies that have been carried out on “genetic algorithms” (a particular class of evolutionary

algorithms using techniques of mutation, selection and recombination, so that a certain population of abstract representations of possible solutions to an optimization problem evolves into better solutions) almost 50 years of studies, analyses and research passed; they aimed at underlining the nearly computational properties of Mother Nature on one side, and the ability of digital machines to simulate and repeat complex natural phenomena. Frankly, I do not wonder any longer what is the most fascinating form of art or the most difficult process

Moreover, I think that the most interesting answers to these themes can be found in the studies and theories of Karl Sims, the famous artist and researcher from Mit Media Lab; in particular, we can find them in his 1993 work, *Genetic Images*, which drew inspiration from his paper *Artificial Evolution of Computer Graphics*, where he described the application of the “genetic algorithms” for the generation of 2D abstract images, starting from complex mathematical formulas. Therefore according to Sims, Darwin’s evolutionary theories can be simulated by means of a generative software or appropriate mathematical algorithms; in this way, “populations of virtual entities specified by coded descriptions in the computer can be evolved by applying these same

natural rules of variation and selection. The definition of fitness can even be altered as the programmer desires.”



I think that what is interesting in *Genetic Images* is the fact that this work was presented as an interactive installation: in other words, it was the public who could choose and select the most interesting images and forms from an aesthetic point of view, among those generated by a computer simulating a process of artificial evolution. The selected images were then recombined by the computer to create new ones, basing on alteration and mutation methods, similar to those of natural species during their evolutionary process. Karl Sims thus wonders whether these interactive evolutions can be considered a creative process. If yes, is it the public who develop an independent creative attitude or is the presence of a designer making the computer follow precise creative

paths necessary? Or is it maybe the computer that develops autonomous creative tendencies?

In his treatise, Sims duly mentions biologist Richard Dawkins who, in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, talks about the ability of natural evolutionary processes to create complex forms without the external presence of any designer or programmer: “It is thus possible that these generative techniques challenge an important aspect of our anthropocentric tendencies, according to which it is difficult for us to believe that we are planned not by a God but by casualness showing

through the codes of a natural evolution”, concludes Sims. Maybe true art lies exactly in all these things.

<http://caliban.mpiz-koeln.mpg.de/stueber/haeckel/kunstformen/natur.html>

<http://www.celestinosoddu.com/>

http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beno%C3%A0Et_Mandelbrot

<http://www.karlsims.com/genetic-images.html>

Anna Adamolo: Practical Critique Of Ideology

Tatiana Bazzichelli



Social crisis, movements, ideologies

The “Onda Anomala” (Anomalous Wave) is the more important social phenomenon seen in Italy in the last years. It started from the school’s ground, from the protests against the so-called “Gelmini reform”, but its value doesn’t seem to be limited to that: it looks like the manifestation of a new process of global social mobilization. The material, cultural and moral uneasiness that starts from the problems of the school, is beginning to concern wider thematic: work, redistribution of wealth, lifestyle, democracy and equality .

The movement crosses different social and generational layers: university and college students (surely until now the majority of the people) teachers and parents of the primary

and secondary school, precarious teachers and researchers of the university. This last component shows that bases are being set for a generalized rebellion against the new indecent ways of working in the so-called “cognitive” or “immaterial” capitalism. It is of course an open question if a massive movement of the temporary workers will rise, in Italy and in the whole Western world. But at least the bases and the premises, with the explosion of the Onda, have been placed.

The movement starts from the school because schools, in the Western world, have almost remained the only places of socialization, in which people get in contact outside of the TV control on the Imaginary. But it grows because we are seeing the failure of thirty years of neo-liberal politics, of privatization of whatever can be privatized. The strength and the cleverness of the Capitalism are impressive , but also the movements that it produces against itself are strong. What caused the beginning of the ’68 movement is back, after 40 years, in a different shape but with the same substance. And with a still bigger capacity, it seems, to escape

the traps of ideology and cleverly move in the terrains of imaginary, language, use of technology.



“To many demonstrations organized by the Extreme Left and by the Social Centres, as the Minister of the Interior has confirmed, take part violent people”. Thus the present premier Silvio Berlusconi commented the first demonstrations against the Gelmini reform of the beginning of October 2008. What should make us wonder (and ponder) of those early reactions, is not so much the light-hearted declarations of intervention of the military, but rather the readiness with which the public (television, but not only) has moved the attention from the real reasons that have brought hundreds of thousand of people to take to the streets, to an “ideological” explanation, based on the spotting of reassuring categories in which to enclose the demonstrators.

These definitions have caught on the

public opinion with extreme facility, and they have often become the focal point of different debates. This can be a surprise only to whom considers ideology as a superficial misrepresentation of the facts, that would be relatively simple to fight and to dismantle only by re-establishing a mythical truth.

Things, alas, are not so simple. If the public opinion so easily falls prey of a grotesque and superficial explanation of complex social movements (“there are violent people that cause trouble and feed discontent”), it is because ideology has structural, and not only super-structural rooting and strength (to use a “Marxian” terminology)

This has already been clearly explained by Guy Debord in the 1960s: “Ideology is the intellectual basis of class societies within the conflictual course of history. Ideological expressions have never been pure fictions; they represent a distorted consciousness of realities, and as such they have been real factors that have in turn produced real distorting effects. This interconnection is intensified with the advent of the spectacle – the materialization of ideology brought about by the concrete success of an autonomized system of economic production – which virtually identifies social reality with an ideology that has remoulded all reality in its own image.” [The society of the show, 212].



The ability of the capitalism of “remould all reality in an ideology’s image”, that Debord calls “materialization of the ideology”, is even more evident if we see it from the point of view of the biopolitics, namely of the direct management of life by the political powers, that therefore become a biopower. From this perspective, the practice to identify different groups of people through objectifying categories becomes necessary, in order to keep a check on productive and social processes. In the political field, the presence of various subjectivities is useless, so it doesn’t have any importance that a wide variety of people has been demonstrating. A shear character is built that doesn’t have anything in common with the various singularities, but is instead a dull generalization of the crowd. What do we mean by this? That further to

economic mechanisms, political instruments, military structures – that of course have a primary role – it is a linguistic device that guarantees the citizens’ compliance of to the “leading values” of a society. With the – much ideological – presumption that language faithfully describes and represents the reality without any margin.

Surely, when the situation grows tense, when reality claims its own autonomy taking non anticipated roads (when the economic crisis gets real, for example), then also the linguistic device hampers, then the statement that language faithfully represents reality appears deceptive and groundless: the declarations of politicians, newspapers, televisions, the intellectuals’ stories and regime comedians’ shows, appear all of a sudden pale and out of focus. Possibilities are born of different linguistic games, of different behaviours, of nonconformist practices. An Anomalous Wave appears, and inside it like bubbling foam, characters are born that are capable to speak different words, to use languages and technologies for different purposes from those for which they were conceived. For example, Anna Adamolo appears.



Anna Adamolo: history of a new collective identity

Anna Adamolo first appeared on the pages of the social network Facebook, in which she presented herself as an alternative to the Law 133 of the Gelmini reform. The images, similar to those of an any political campaign, represented a woman in her fifties with violet-rimmed glasses. At first look it could seem just another candidate, but the users contacted by her received a particular request: "If you become a friend of Anna Adamolo, we ask you to change your name, your profile or your current state by showing her name and her logo instead of yours". In the mean time, a blog was founded (<http://annaadamolo.noblogs.org/>) where it was possible to download various materials and to get more information about the objectives of this operation. Anna Adamolo, actually an anagram of Onda

Anomala, recommended herself as a collective name through which tell one's own story or to claim protesting actions against the measures of the Government.

In that same period, newspapers and televisions had shown a particular interest for the social network Facebook in relation to the intervention of different political groups on that medium. Particularly, the presence of numerous groups against the decree or against Gelmini herself, and of fewer groups instead supporting them. A number of days before the appearance of Anna Adamolo, the first account named for Mariastella Gelmini had been created, one among many named after famous or political characters, but the first one to bear the name of the - by then - famous minister.

Easy to imagine, all users who joined the account ("friends" in Facebook slang) mostly shared the political positions of the minister. The different messages appeared more or less similar to this: "Unfortunately, once more, it is as President Berlusconi has said: students get manipulated!": users, in short, reintroduced the same kinds of categorization promoted by the government. It was evident that the definitions given by the ideology, had become reality for all subjects linked to that political credo.



Anna Adamolo was born as an answer to those mechanisms, it proposed as a not normalized imaginary able to express the different subjectivities beyond the instruments of materialization of the ideology used by the institutional and economic authorities. The project's objectives were made clearer on November 14, 2008, when "more than 300.000 students arrived to Rome with trains and buses from all over Italy , started a march from the Sapienza, for the national demonstration organized by the Universities. The objective had publicly been announced more than a week earlier: to surround Palazzo Chigi, to shout 'in the face' of the illegitimate government those weeks' slogan: 'We won't pay your crisis' " (from the site www.uniriot.org).

In the previous days, Anna Adamolo showed up in the Milan train station

during the protests of Milan 's Onda Anomala, in order to obtain special trains for Rome 's demonstration. In that circumstance, false discounts had been issued to reach the Capital.

In the morning of the 14th, the most important Italian newspapers received hundreds of very peculiar emails. They arrived from the web domain ministeroistruzione.net and were graphically arranged like an official press release from the Ministry office. This was the text of the e-mail: "I am Anna Adamolo [...] Today students, teachers, parents, workers and citizens occupy side by side with me the website of the University and Research Ministry". Just a few hours later, the websites of La Repubblica , of AGI (Italian Journalistic Agency) and of other newspapers headlined: "SCHOOL: HACKER IN THE WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION", linking the hacked website www.ministeroistruzione.net.

Probably they did not catch the sense of a sentence written at the bottom of the e-mail: "Today, we symbolically build on the Net a new Ministry, the Ministry that we all would want to have in Italy , where the voices of the temporary workers, of the students, of the teachers, of all the citizens, are finally heard."



Not a “Shadow Ministry”, therefore, but a “Wave Ministry”. Of course, it wasn’t an action of defacement of the official website, but instead an action of hacking of the informatic systems. The official website had on purpose been cloned on another selected domain so that it could be confused with the official one. After a few seconds on the website, a full screen video started with images of demonstrations of the days before. With an unexpectedly calm musical background, a female voice began to speak saying: “I am Anna Adamolo. I want to bring all these voices inside this Building.” That same voice multiplied told the different experiences of the demonstrators and finally stated: “Now, we are in politics.” The users were rerouted then on another website in which it is still now possible to listen to the phone calls and read the emails sent

from whomever feels to be Anna Adamolo. Some of these emails were recently published in the book “I am Anna Adamolo. Voices and stories from the Onda Anomala”, of the editions NdA.

At the same time of the emails to the newspapers, a message was released online in which the internet users were requested to contribute to an action of googlebombing by linking in their own site or blog the address www.ministeroistruzione.net with the words “Department of Education.” A couple of weeks later, the objective was reached, and the “new” website of the Ministry got at first place in the searches on Google, overcoming the official website.

The same day of the demonstration in Rome , while declaring a symbolic occupation of the Onda Anomala, the Facebook account of Mariastella Gelmini was changed by replacing the name of the Minister with that of Anna Adamolo (which demonstrated that the account had not been created by Gelmini herself, but it was a fake). This happened while tens of people paraded toward Palazzo Chigi wearing violet-rimmed glasses downloaded from the blog, and spraying the logo of the new Wave Minister on the walls of Rome .



A movement that since the beginning refused any outside representative, ironically struck the various politic parts, and played with the mechanisms of representation transforming each and every demonstrator into Minister.

In the following weeks the initiatives branded Anna Adamolo multiplied. The Wave Minister showed up in flesh and blood storming on the stage of Piccolo Teatro Studio in Milan to replace Minister Gelmini by now absent from any official circumstance.

In this complex operation have also been involved arts groups like Les Lien Invisibles and I/o cose and the graphic duo ParcoDiYellowstone. The project AHA: Activism-Hackin-Artivism has supported the operation in all different phases, directly involving different members of the mailing-list aha@ecn.org. Besides this, the different groups and student collectives have been fundamental,

firstly the collective Aut Art of the Accademia di Brera, but also the collective of Political Sciences in Milan, the self-formation collective from Bologna, Chainworkers, Diversamentestrutturati from Milan, the students' coordination of the university of Ferrara, the student collectives of Trento and many others. It was a dense net of collaborations in which were shared experiences and competences, in order to accomplish a national-scale project.



Anna Adamolo between hacking, activism and linguistic guerrilla

The experience of Anna Adamolo brings new life to the Italian activism scene and, at the same time, it converts in actions those pulses of the dissent that had been consolidated by decades of hacktivist practices. Anna Adamolo plays with language, but also with the concept of collective identity, becoming an icon for those who try to rewrite the codes of the

reality through the détournement of the symbols. A tradition that in Italy was born in the nineties with the multi-individual Luther Blissett and, ten years before, worldwide with the open-pop-star Monty Cantsin, multiple entity of the neoist (anti)movement. Unlike Monty Cantsin, an individuality used as a nickname by the Neoism exponents and therefore connected more to specific subjects than to a wide collective, Anna Adamolo is the voice of a network. A network of people that involves young students and researchers, temporary workers and teachers, all those people who want to be Anna Adamolo to make real activity of a political, cultural and social Utopia.

The networking component is therefore central in Anna Adamolo, and its net is inspired by the anonymous one created by the Luther Blissett, but with different objectives. Although they represented a plurality of individuals, the Luther Blissett operated independently from any political movement, insinuating like a virus in the bugs of the media system and in the drifts of the urban legends. Instead Anna Adamolo was born within the movement of the Onda Anomala, it has no face but at the same time has many faces, deeply rooted in political and social battles. Faces that bear manifold aspects, while fighting for a common

objective. Anna Adamolo interprets Monty Cantsin and Luther Blissett by playing with language and with the labyrinths of politics, and by making the state bureaucracy open and possible. Its answer is the creation of an “intimate bureaucracy” (Craig J. Saper 2001) creatively re-interpreting the structural elements of the everyday life, like years before did the Mail Art and other avant-gardes. The institutional symbols are overturned – official websites, stamps of the Department of Education – in order to make them something shareable and creative. Signs and marks of a net of subjects that changes and determines its own rules, that wants to autonomously build its own education and its own future.

Anna Adamolo becomes the symbolic kernel of a precarious movement that in the past had already showed its radical appearance through visual messages, and turned the heaviness of the traditional politics into a spiral of ironic activism: St. Precarious, the Saint of the precarious workers, and Serpica Naro, the stylist of the imaginary are other examples. The message has finally reached a community of varied subjects, not only belonging to the hacker, activist and guerrilla marketing movements, and is directed to all people who want to transform our present. In this sense, Anna Adamolo was the true semiotic revolution, because it

successfully tried to reach those who, for the first time, decided to measure against the possible alternatives by demonstrating and actively operating on the internet.



Conclusioni: for a new language and a new politics

It seems evident, from everything written above, that the operation Anna Adamolo is a meaningful episode of a not-new tendency (it was already evident, during the 1900s, from the Berliner Dada to the slogans of the Parisian 1968), but proposed with new strength and new awareness by the Onda Anomala. We can synthesize it this way: no revolution or change is ever possible in any level of the human activity, if the revolution or the change don't start with language. The main reason for this affirmation has been exposed as clearly as possible by Giorgio Agamben: "Since it is clear that the show is the language, the ability to

communicate is for a man being linguistic. This means that the Marxian analysis must be integrated, capitalism (.) was not only the expropriation of the productive activity, but also - and above all - the alienation of the language itself, of the linguistic nature and communicativeness of the man itself, of the "logos" in which a fragment by Eraclito identifies the Common. The extreme form of this expropriation of the Common is the show, that is the politics in which we live. [George Agamben, "Glosse in margine ai Commentari sulla società dello spettacolo", SugarCo, Milan 1990, pp. 242-243]

The strength of Anna Adamolo, same as that of every collective name, of every aware operation of net art, is in the ability to reset the bond between language and world as operated by tradition and by power, and to create the conditions for the creation of a new world. Every time a person, a human being, visits the website www.ministeroistruzione.net and leaves a message that begins with "I am Anna Adamolo...", it acts on the most difficult linguistic ground, but also on the more powerful. Enunciates like "I am XY", "my name is XY", are the clearest and most dangerous form of the so-called "performative enunciates", that is of those affirmations that complete an action in the moment they are uttered, and

that the 1900 linguistics has studied with the various “linguistic actions” theories (from Wittgenstein to Austin to Searle).

This is exactly why the “denomination” operations (from the registry office to the baptism) are reserved in our societies to the official powers, i.e. State and Church. It is again Agamben that clarifies the linguistic challenge that the society of the show-business, the society of global and Omni-pervasive capitalism: “What prevents the communication, is the same communicability, the men are separated by what unites them (...). In the show-business society (...) not only language is constituted autonomously, but it doesn’t even reveal anything of all things (...). The times in which we are living, are also those where it becomes possible to men, for the first time, to experience their own linguistic essence – not some content of the language, but the language itself, not some true proposition, but the fact itself that we speak. [Giorgio Agamben, op. cit., pp. 245-246]



It is the complexity of the linguistic fact, its new tangling with the economic, productive and mediatic mechanisms, that gives us the chance to radically re-discuss the devices of domination that capitalism shows us as natural and obvious, first of all the linguistic mechanisms. To regain one’s own “language capacity” means therefore to escape the alienation of the language that perpetuates and makes those devices possible.

That’s why Anna Adamolo is not only an interesting and useful container for all the proposals made by the movements (from self-education in the schools and in the universities, to a guaranteed social income), but it is also an attempt to build a new language of the collective action, of politics, starting from its softer and deeper ground, that is the mechanisms of communication. It is a long and complex job, that however the Onda Anomala (and Anna Adamolo with it) has already started.

Milano 2009: Where Are You Culture?

Bertram Niessen



Bertram Niessen

Milan is a mean city. People know and have always known it. It is the capital of industry, money and productivity. However, for a long time, Milan was also something else.

Like all big industrial cities, for a long time it cultivated, in its working-class neighbourhood, the immigrants' street culture with all their conflicts. At the same time, it was the city of the cultured middle class, of the publishing houses, of the daily newspapers, of graphics and, for some time, of art. Then, at a certain point, something broke. In the vortical processes of social reorganization after the end of Ford's economic ideas, Milan tried to become a

cosmopolitan city, open to new trends and able to radically innovate in fashion and design. According to many people, it was at that moment that Milan lost its soul, in the vortex of fashion, cocaine and corruption started in the Eighties.

It is difficult to judge and understand if something true that was then destroyed really existed. On the contrary, what is easy to see is that at a certain point Milan came into collision with itself, blinded by the culture of image and television. In a sadder and sadder cultural panorama, where every place of resistance linked to the traditions of the old districts has been programmatically demolished and replaced by fast-food restaurants or shops of important international brands, Milan has lost the awareness of itself and the image that was created by few people for few people's benefit prevailed on all the urban area, as if the few hundreds of square meters of Via Montenapoleone and of the fashion districts represented the whole city with its million and three hundred thousand inhabitants, its contradictions and paradoxes.



The element that is maybe the most harrowing is that this process of systematic impoverishment of the quality of life has been celebrated many times by Milanese people. More and more lost in a city, in a country and in a world whose dynamics they do not understand, the inhabitants of this disheartening cement expanse have competed to sell pieces of their individual and collective freedoms in exchange for security. Security. The magic word, what everybody seems to look for; but it is exactly the search for security that kills. More and more urban spaces are empty, less frequented and Milanese people are more and more alone. And more and more insecure. The effects of these dynamics are countless and, unfortunately, often long-term.

What I would like to share with Digicult's readers, instead, is a brief reflection on the relationship between the obsession for security and the practices and disciplines Digicult

monthly deals with in these pages. In the process of impoverishment that hit the city in the last few decades, three aspects have grown particularly: ignorance, monotony and intolerance.

First of all, the attention of the cultural institutions towards lower and alternative forms of culture has constantly reduced; some of them were able to achieve good results thanks to the efforts and the resolution of single professionals, but there were not the will and the ability to give a course and a coordination to these activities. The pernicious effect of this laxity is the annulment, on a long term, of the good things that these few people have done.



Secondly, we have witnessed a constant appeal for traditional values and for the sense of homogeneity and belonging; it is as if the older and older inhabitants of this older and older city have forgotten that the results they saw in their youth were

very often linked to the mixture and the combination of enthusiasms and differences coming from different areas of Italy.

Finally, Milan 's community is less and less able to manage conflicts, forgetting that a community without conflicts is not possible at all. In this way, each smallest form of departure from standards and average has become an affront to the integrity of the city and everything that was labelled as "uncivilized" is now a "crime". And, above all, to show the rest of the city the necessity for an otherness, the need (which is first of all existential and not political) for cultural codes that are different from

the dominating ones has become criminal. The flag that is waved by the champions of security is that of legality: "Illegal practices cannot be tolerated", thundered Milan mayor Letizia Moratti. Every student attending the second year of the faculty of sociology could explain to the mayor that a society cannot exist without spaces of liminality, dark areas and ambiguous codes made up of dim lights.

Because, and this is the most serious thing, a city managing its social, and thus cultural policies, basing on the equation between deviance and criminality is a city that is bound to die.



Milan wants to be a creative city. And its administration is convinced that to be a creative city it is enough to have an adequate number of workers in certain professional fields. This is not sufficient and everybody can see it. There is not creativity without social innovation and there is not social innovation without experimentation. Milan has a vital need for informal spaces. Milan needs illegal practices.

The relationship between new media and the *centri sociali* in Italy and in Milan has always been very close, much more than in other countries. Starting from the world of BBS and of the cyberpunk in the Eighties, passing through the experience of ECN and of the Hacklabs and coming to the countless artistic experimentations linked to music, the *centri sociali* have often been the only places that were open enough to let those who wanted a different relationship with technology try, succeed or fail. I do not mean that this relationship has

always been easy. They are short stories of enthusiasm, conflicts, illusions and disillusion. However, if in the other big European cities, maybe suffering, the funds for festivals and exhibition spaces were placed at disposal by the local administration, Milan has lived a story made up of collaborations in occupied places. In illegal places. In places of experimentation and social innovation.

To remove these places means to remove one of the few cultural institutions working well in a city. And the consequences of this nth impoverishment of the collective heritage will fall upon all the Milanese, for such a long period that is too painful to imagine it.



Marco Mancuso

I am taking my cue from one of the first protest letters I wrote in the pages of Digicult on the same day of the eviction of Cox18 in Milan, as

evidence for what has happened in Milan in the last few days and as a warning to myself against landing in boredom and in the pietistic resignation of an emergency cultural and social situation.

For those who live in Milan , who love and hate this city and everywhere in Italy identify Cox18 and Primo Moroni Calusca Archive as an important political and cultural heritage for any form of counterculture and activism in Italy , Thursday 22 January was an extremely sad day. At dawn, in a devious, forced and mean way and without being informed, against the law, according to which an official legal amendment after the current eviction case had to be waited for, the police entered the occupied and self-managed *centro sociale* Cox18 and the rooms of Calusca City Lights and of Moroni Archive, taking possession of the rooms of the centre that, at that time in the morning, were completely empty.

Unlike other historical countercultural situations in Milan and surroundings, Conchetta has been and still is, together with few other experiences, a place of memory, a testimony of a period that maybe ended, a place where to freely suggest ideas and cultural events, a place of personal memories and friendships, the seat of the very rich Moroni Archive, the last true antihero of this city, one of the

last people that really loved it and with Calusca collected texts and videos, whose possible confiscation would be one of the heaviest loss of audiovisual material that the countercultural movements of this country could ever experience.



The eviction of Conchetta, because of the ways in which it was carried out and for its political and social reasons, is maybe the last definite theft and offence act not only against the young people of Milan counterculture, but against all the people that in Italy want to have freedom of speech and expression, to identify themselves with a place, with a series of initiatives, against all the people who do not want to run away from their history but to resist, against all the people who, from Rome to Turin, from Venice to Palermo, are experiencing I am certain of that the repression, the loss of their identity, the groundless and arrogant insults by institutions, by any kind of institution, the aggressive

ones that repress and the indecent ones that say nothing.

The days after the eviction were, from a certain point of view, an important historical moment in Milan, a place where to be to really sense the discontent of a whole generation of young people, students, professionals, creative people, artists and intellectuals. For those who saw it and for those who were not there. From the first still sleepy and upset 30 people who came to Via Conchetta 18, the number of young and old people wanting to protest gradually grew: I witnessed the first defence actions, the block of Viale Tibaldi, one of the main roads in the city, the march of demonstrators in the district streets from Porta Genova to the Darsena (dock); these are all historical places of Milan counterculture, read *La luna sotto casa* by Primo Moroni, that Primo Moroni who is certainly screaming from his grave because of what is happening, and you will understand what I mean. And also demonstrations near Palazzo Marino, solid interventions by the intellectuals of the city (among them, Paolo Rossi and his protest cry against Palazzo Marino during the meeting of the city government on the Conchetta case), concerts in XXIV Maggio square and the great demonstration on Saturday 24 January, in which many people took part.

However, we must acknowledge something: the Moratti government has succeeded in what no political movement and no social utopia had succeeded in the last twenty years. The eviction, the repression by the police and deputy mayor Riccardo De Corato's arrogant words, his threats to close all the occupied *centri sociali* that are properties of Milan (Conchetta, Pergola, Torchiera and Cantiere), mayor Moratti's lack of respect because she wanted to arrogate to herself the right to manage the cultural heritage which was collected by Moroni, whose daughter reacted with a desperate appeal, united everyone under the same banner of protest, of indignation, of rage, which are determined by tiredness.



Yes, tiredness. Because when you talk with those I like defining “non-protected minorities”, tiredness is the prevailing feeling. Tiredness because of a situation of cultural and urban

degeneration, which seems irreparable: the closing of Conchetta seems a warning, it is the nth symbol of which this city has been deprived, a city that is living a social and cultural impoverishment and is not able to find the key to the problem among superstar councillors for culture, petty politicians, shrewd and dishonest people, lobbies of politicized intellectuals and laxists who cannot see beyond their small gardens, which were created after years of esteemed activity, who are incapable of sharing knowledge, who are not interested in the growth of the new generation of artists and producers of culture, to which I belong; on the contrary, they are more guilty than other people of their silence, their indifference, their class-conscious attitude. And this is not *my* opinion, it is a shared opinion: I am not the only one who thinks that, as a journalist I try to put down on paper a general feeling, which I think must be listened to and everyone must sense!

inally, tiredness is not a physical or mental condition, but it involves our souls. And this does not mean to pity ourselves, to speak always ill of this city, but it means to understand where discontent lies and from where, on day or another, the germ of social disorder will come, because there will be that day, it is now inevitable. It means to understand well the difficulties in economy and life that

my generation of culture people is suffering in this city, which does not offer opportunities, jobs, which has been emptied of energy and lifeblood and is forced to survive clinging, tooth and nail, to the hope of a revival we cannot yet see. The city of Marinetti and the Futurism, of Gianni Colombo's Gruppo T and of Bruno Munari, of Luigi Russolo and of the RAI studio of phonology, of the magazine "Re Nudo" and of the experience of Lambro Park, of Shake and Primo Moroni, of Memphis Group and of Ettore Sottsass, of the Virus and Deposito Bulk centres, of Studio Azzurro new media group and of Otolab, and of many other experiences of artistic, literary and social avant-garde.



In a city that has already begun to propagandize its future projects for the Expo 2015, its cultural DNA open to diversity and sharing, in a racist and intolerant city, indifferent to the ethnic minorities living in it, incapable

of being concerned about nothing but profit and culture with small “c”, that of great exhibitions, of great events, the so-called mainstream culture, the eviction of Cox18 seems not to concern those who continue to complain, who do not identify themselves with this city but do not take sides, who run away without taking responsibilities, who do not practise what they preach and take offence when you point that out to them.

The occupation of Cox18 by the police concerns those who are generally called “movements” by mass media, but whom I prefer to identify with a formless and colourless area of faces and experiences, of artists and intellectuals, often linked to alternative art expressions, those with which Digicult deals in its specific field of electronic and digital culture, of the good and bad use of old and new technologies, of its applications and expressions, both in the well-known areas of festivals and art exhibitions and in the areas of *centri sociali* that only few people know and from which these cultures come (as other social and cultural experiences at a European level witness in Germany, Spain, Holland, England and in the North European countries).

The past days and the coming ones will thus be full of initiatives, both in the streets and on the Internet. There

are many doubts and questions about what it is better to do and the way in which it is better to do it: in the last few days there have been many discussions with friends and acquaintances. I do not know what strategy will be successful, but as for my natural professional bias I think that the mixture between “real” and “virtual” action is maybe the best solution or at least the only one that we can practise, until Morpheus has found a new Neo that will take all of us to Zion . I am also convinced that until we have attracted the attention of mass media, until it has been talked about you and your discontent have been deeply perceived, we will be bound to tilt at windmills.



My appeal is not so much to the most famous artists at this moment who, according to precise codes of false provocation, typical of the world of contemporary art, condemn the short-sightedness of the institutions that then invite them and pay them a

lot of money, as to the intellectuals and artists who really love this city, understand the emergency situation, know it very well and can represent a voice that otherwise, for the umpteenth time, will be alone in fighting for what it considers as its right: culture, the cultural work that can derive from it and the free spaces without any political, economic and lobby logic, where to practise it!

As far as I am concerned, I want to be a nemesis, a worm, and use the only weapon I have. As Ettore Sottsass told

me during an interview some years ago: “You have a weapon that is more effective than many others. Word. Use it.” There is a sentence of De Andrè that continuously comes to my mind, still today after the first text to which this refers, and I am sure that many of you remember it: “And if in your neighbourhoods everything’s the same as yesterday, without barricades without wounded people, without grenades, if you believe the “truth” of television, although at that moment you have forgiven yourself you are all the same involved.”

Eduardo Navas: Track Me Not, Please!

Lucrezia Cippitelli



Three years ago I had a long interview with Eduardo Navas about his editorial project, “NewmediaFix”, the online platform that republishes and redistributes texts and interviews from the most influential international magazines focused on art and media (between them Digicult) and which I collaborated with as editor for almost one year. I met again by email Eduardo for another interview about his last online project, “Traceblog”, launched on October 2008

The artist, theorician, curator and scholar from Us works on software and web-resources for blogging, reflecting also upon the dynamics of the Internet, the concept of Remix and distribution of culture and concepts, information, thoughts, since the beginning of his artistic career. He is now one of the most influential

voices on Network cultures and use/abuse of its tools. As Eduardo asserts in this long chat, referring to “Traceblog” but it could be related with his art practice at large: ‘I aim to explore the implications of the growing pervasiveness of information flow and its manipulation. From this point of view, I see it in direct relation to my ongoing investment in blogging culture».

In line with his early net art projects as “Goobalization” and “Diary of a Star”, and in the same time following Eduardo’s theoretical researches on blogging and remix, “Traceblog” is an online artwork that appropriates the free Firefox plugin (Track me not), created by the same developers of the web browser in order to obfuscate the transparency of the online activities of Internet users. As result, “Traceblog” publishes the logs of Eduardo’s daily online researches and activities on a web site. The same website contains links to the explanation of the project, links to the Firefox plugin and some tools that make users aware on how to hide search trails. “Traceblog” make visible how our daily browsing Internet activity is tracked by the browser we

use and produces an archive of all our data and information that could be used for commercial and control purposes. A fact, the data mining, totally out of control if we consider all the web 2.0 platforms, that stimulate Internet users obsession to show themselves and be in touch: just consider common tools as Blogger, propriety of a big commercial corporation as Google, just to make an example. But we could make few other names as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, and also (whatever they are not related with browsing), Skype, Msn, the free services for email and so on and so on We talked with Eduardo about all that and much more.



Lucrezia Cippitelli: Introduce in few words the essence of Traceblog. Not its “how to”, that Internet users can find in the presentation page, but specifically your conceptual focus.

Eduardo Navas: Part of my conceptual focus is explained in the About page,

but I’m glad that you ask me this question because there are some things that I left unexplained, partly because I want the user to figure out some of the implications behind Traceblog. The explanation in the about page entertains the premise of surveillance and data-mining and their relation to loss of privacy. What I don’t explain, however, is that I use traceblog to reflect on the shifts that blogging as a practice has taken in the last couple of years. How expression of one’s opinion can begin to turn into noise, due to over-saturation and expectation that everyone should write on a blog. On the other hand, automation in access of information is really becoming the norm with RSS feeds, and for a while I had been thinking about the act of blogging becoming automated. I thought of how a diary is simply a labor that is hard to keep up with today, due to all the multi-tasking that is expected of people.

I felt this to be the case with my reblogging of the Warhol Diaries(<http://navasse.net/star>). So, aside from developing a project that that would comment on the transparency of data-mining, I also wanted to create a project that would expose the possibility of having a software write something for the user. The appropriation of TrackMeNot enabled me to put all these interests into practice, thus creating a commentary

on blogging as a pervasive act of boredom to some degree.



What I find most interesting about TrackMeNot (<http://mrl.nyu.edu/dhowe/trackmenot/>) is that the pseudo search results

are somewhat a reflection of what I do online. According to the developers of the Firefox extension, TrackMeNot keeps track of the actual searches and with time begins to assimilate parallel results that somehow reference indirectly what the user would search for.

I find this interesting, and can see how some of the results in my logs could be of my own interest, but I would never had thought to do such searches. It's like having my own double, a clone about whom I'm learning more and more about. I like this about TrackMeNot, and it was actually the first thing that interested me about it.



Lucrezia Cippitelli: We already had a long interview, 3 years ago, about your project newmediaFIX (<http://www.digicult.it/digimag/article.asp?id=239>). Since then, your editorial project seems to go ahead. Meanwhile you developed an intense theoretical activity with your blog Remix Theory, and a curatorial activity for gallery@calit2, at UC San Diego, where you are a Ph.D. candidate. “Traceblog” seems to bring you back to your early net-based artworks. I especially refer to Diary of a Star (2004-07) and Goobalization (2005). How did you arrive to set up this project in the context of your wider artistic and theoretical research?

Eduardo Navas: I have relied on blogging technology for some time to develop most of my online projects, as well as online resources. I think my curatorial interests are also informed by the aesthetic of blogging, which in the end, I deem to be about selecting

and evaluating material for thematic presentations.

The forms through which the material is presented, of course, is different, but in principle, to blog is to curate: to blog is to remix. Traceblog is really just an extension of what I explored in Diary of a Star; only I go about it in a different way, by taking a critical position on data-mining. I also consider Traceblog to be critically informed much like Goobalization. For me Traceblog is another project in which I aim to explore the implications of the growing pervasiveness of information flow and its manipulation.

From this point of view, I see it in direct relation to my ongoing investment in blogging culture. So, I don’t know if I have gone back to my early net-based artworks, as you suggest. I would say that I’m doing what I have always done: to use blogs to comment on networked culture.

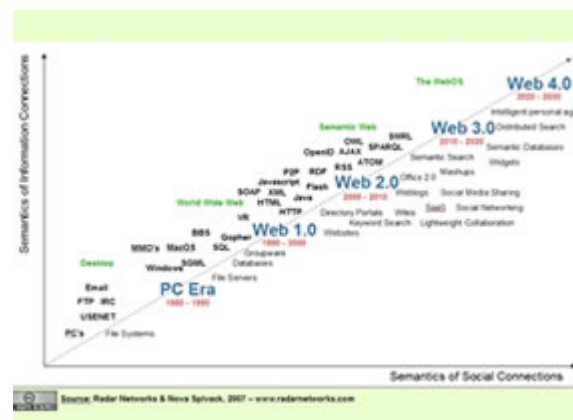


Lucrezia Cippitelli: Years ago, I assisted to your presentations on blogging technology, which you viewed as some kind of activity related with hackers. With Traceblog it looks like you are completely changing your point of view, relating blogs with web 2.0, along the lines of more popular and obvious social networks such as Facebook, Flickr, Myspace or Youtube. What happened in the meanwhile to the “hacker ethic”?

Eduardo Navas: I believe that the “hacker ethic” in online culture is still at play. But blogs have become assimilated, which is what happens with anything that is introduced and gains value in online communities. One of the reasons why blogs have thrived is because developers saw potential in them for data mining. I knew this from the very moment that Google bought blogger. I knew Search was entering a new stage of pervasiveness. When I discussed hackers in the past I related them to the concept of play. I believe that in the presentation that you refer to, which took place in Santiago De Chile , I discussed a reflection by Richard Stallman about his college experience. He explains that hackers are interested in playing with things, to see what could happen. Hackers like to figure out how to make things perform in unexpected ways. I do not reserve the term hacker only in direct

relation to computers, but extend the term to all other areas in life, and believe that others who write about hacking as a constructive attitude think about it in the same way. I believe that this has been in large part the driving force in the development of blogs and other CMS platforms.

Today the hacker aesthetic (of playing to see what happens) is everywhere, and everyone even the most casual user is given options to optimize a tool, and is often pointed to forums that explain how to improve on particular tools. But if you mean by hacking a form of resistance, I think that this is another aspect of networked culture that is also still quite strong, and I do think that blogs play a contingent or at least complementary role in this area as well. If you imply that blogging had the potential to be a critical tool, in line with the origins of computer hacking practice, I do believe this is also still possible. It is up to people to do what they want.



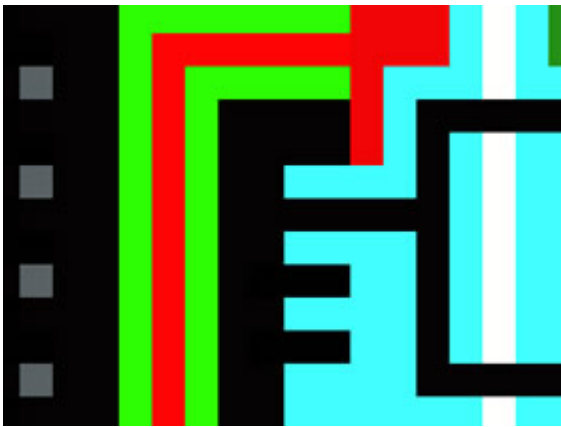
Lucrezia Cippitelli: The esthetic of Traceblog shows, in my opinion, your interest in being absolutely understated. I guess you deliberately used a simple and common blog interface from the popular “Blogger”, a green background, a totally un-designed type and the pages are filled with long and unreadable ghosts of your web search activated by the Firefox plug-in TrackMeNot. Since April 2008, Traceblog published online pages and pages of links and characters. You’re not taking (and I think you avoid) any underground aesthetic. You’re not assuming any critical, radical political position. You’re not playing with the big classics as Orwell’s Big Brother, you’re not embracing the radical hacker community position about the necessity to guarantee privacy for the users against the control of contents. Is there a specific conceptual reason for that?

Eduardo Navas: There is a very specific position for the look of Traceblog. This actually goes back to your previous question. You asked about the “Hacker Aesthetic” before, and in this sense, Traceblog is a conceptual hack. By this I mean that I have taken two elements meant to function in a certain way and have brought them together for critical reflection. To achieve this I have done as little as possible to the

appropriated elements. I chose blogger because this one is embedded in the system of search. It is one of the most popular blogging tools today. I find it of great importance that blogger is owned by Google, and Google is one of the search engines which TrackMeNot uses to perform automated searches. So in this sense the information comes full circle, and the purpose of using TrackMeNot could be considered futile to some degree.

You can think of Traceblog as a conceptual mashup; by this I mean that just like in a musical mashup one can notice two or more elements at play at once. Traceblog functions in similar fashion. It presents the logs as they are archived each time that I log on and launch Firefox and it deliberately looks like a blog from blogger with one of the most generic templates. Presenting the material as default deconstructs both the logs’ and the blog’s naturalized states. And hopefully the viewer can see the implications behind both elements. At the same time, the entries, as you explain are not welcoming to the reader, if anything they deny any possible coherent reading, and the most one can hope for is some random scanning of terms. This is actually a comment on people’s obsession to express themselves online. Expression online via blogs has become so co-opted that it can now

be read as an empty form of entertainment. The log entries are reference to this.



Lucrezia Cippitelli: What I personally find interesting about TrackMeNot, the plug-in developed to obfuscate internet search that you use as the engine to develop Traceblog, is that the developers in 2006 say that the plug-in “protects users against search data profiling”, pointing out especially, the defense of Internet users from commercial data profiling. Quoting the presentation text “About Traceblog” , it also says that “Keeping track of people’s surfing activity has become an essential element for data-mining” often used “to better understand people’s trends”: here there is not a specific reference to something I think is the real scary effect of the “transparency” of every Internet-related activity (from emailing to browsing): the control with the focus on the “war on terror” legitimized since 9/11; in general a

mechanism working for decades, just think about Echelon for instance. Do you think that the development of web 2.0 and the massification of social networks changed something in terms of critical use of networking media and control?

Eduardo Navas: One of the things that concerns critically minded individuals is how emerging technology can be misused for political purposes. I am rather diplomatic in my statement about data profiling as I believe that there is a positive side to the current development of data-mining. But the major problem for me is that there is little education about the implications of emerging technologies that thrive on data-mining. Regarding Echelon, has it changed networking control in Media? Well, of course—since the endeavor is a collaboration between the United States and the United Kingdom and other well-developed countries. But in reality this is just an extension of the early days of the Internet. Nation-states monitoring information is not new by any means. As it is commonly known, we would not have the Internet were it not for the Cold War. So, having global powers invested in the next stage of data mining is not unexpected. One thing that I do think is crucial for a conscious global culture is to have a deliberate investment in understanding and utilizing technology constructively.

This is quite possible. The most historically obvious example to date is the outcome of the United States 2008 presidential elections. I strongly believe that Barack Obama won because he understood how networked culture functions, and he made the most of the technologies available to him to reach as many people as possible. It is quickly becoming common knowledge through numerous articles that Obama learned from the mistakes of John Kerry, and also the strategies of Howard Dean.



Ultimately, I find that education is the real issue with all that is going on today. I think it has always been the case since humans developed the concept of culture. Education is the only investment that cannot crash like the market. It is the highest prized

commodity, which is why it gets more and more expensive not only in the United States, but all over the world. The power of education is that once a person understands how to learn on her own, such knowledge cannot be taken away. It's like learning a secret. It cannot be taken back. And that person has the power to do as she pleases with the information. Once a person understands how to research to keep learning on her own, that person's position can only increase in value. So, the real issue in culture has always been about education. Traceblog is about educating oneself, in order to learn about the real implications of daily actions that appear innocent and incidental, but which are of great value to data-miners. Traceblog is about awareness—critical awareness to be more precise. Critical awareness cannot be bought or sold, it can only be developed through cultural exchanges that question reality. We should keep this in mind day in and day out.

<http://navasse.net/traceblog/>

<http://newmediafix.net>

<http://navasse.net/star/>

Transmediale 09: The Berlin's Paradoxes

Donata Marletta



First paradox: Berlin it's frozen.

Transmediale's 09 theme "Deep North" rotates around the concern about the planet's climate change, and how this inexorable process inevitably has an impact on every aspect of the contemporary culture and society. "Deep North" is the starting point that opens the doors to diverse artistic interpretations, raising a whole range of issues translated and relocated into the language of digital art.

Second paradox: Where are the emotions?

In the exhibition hall, and in the foyer of the huge space, perhaps too dispersive, of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW - House of World Cultures) arranged for the occasion by

the Berliner group raumtaktik (<http://www.raumtaktik.de/>), are exhibited the numerous artistic projects coming from multidisciplinary backgrounds. For an entire overview on the productions I suggest to check the Transmediale's website that offers the necessary information about the artists and the artworks showed, which range from the mobile kitchen of "Specialità di Silicio", to the equipment for the perfect squatter of "Field Notes: Forays into Cocoons".



Among the projects I would like to highlight "Post Global Warming Survival Kit" by Petko Dourmana (<http://www.dourmana.com/>), an interactive installation that walks the visitor, through the use of infrared binoculars, inside a disturbing post-

apocalyptic scenario, simulating a sensorial and introspective experience. A huge part of the programme is also dedicated to film and video curated by Marcel Schwierin and Florian Wüst, with about seventy productions chosen for the Transmediale 09 Award.

Third paradox: Words, words.

The festival turns around the conference (for those interested it may be listened on stream on the Transmediale web site), the debates, and the presentations that take place in the auditorium of the HKW, in the Cafè Global, and in the space called Digital Greenhouse, creating a forum for critical confrontation on the themes related to the healthiness of our planet, and in particular how art and technology could contribute to bring in the front page what before was just a prediction, and today has become reality: the planet Earth is in serious danger.



Transmediale and Club Transmediale jointly present the awaited audiovisual performance “Parallel Head”, the latest work of the Japanese artist Ryoichi Kurokawa (<http://www.ryoichikurokawa.com/>), interviewed by Bertram Niessen for Digimag17/September06 - <http://www.digicult.it/digimag/article.asp?id=627>). Ryoichi pervades the audience with images and sounds in perfect synchrony, creating a dreamlike and celestial narration of unique elegance reflecting the standards of the Japanese culture and style. Ryoichi plays with the inextricable interlacement between audio and video, gently wrapping the auditorium of the HKW in a soft and muffled cocoon.

Big expectations also for the Dutch trio Telcosystems (<http://www.telcosystems.net/>), creators of the official trailer for Transmediale 09; this year they also present at the auditorium of the HKW their recent work “Mortals Electric”. The performance is developed around a sonorous cathartic crescendo, accompanied by graphics that take different nuances, until it reaches the final part where the acoustic and visual impact charge the ambient of power, until it becomes quite unbearable for the human body.



workshops, under this year's theme "Structures".

The Club gives a dynamic impulse to the general bourgeois atmosphere, and a bit sleepy of the elder sister Transmediale, which seems to suffer, like many festivals of the same genre around the world, of a tiredness probably owed to the consolidation of a formula that now it's almost obsolete.

Fourth paradox: the gift of ubiquity.

Transmediale crosses, with the risk of a crash, the programme of Club Transmediale, which this year celebrates its tenth anniversary. The festival, primarily focussed on electronic music, offers also a wide daily programme, with debates and

www.transmediale.de/

www.transmediale.de/en/transmediale09-streaming-programme

www.clubtransmediale.de/

To Give Shape To Social Networks

Gigi Ghezzi



It is no accident that the next Social Networking World Forum taking place on 9 and 10 March at the Olympia Conference Centre in London has an auspice as a title, that of “giving a shape” to social networks.

The forum is actually divided into two main events: one is devoted to social networks, the other to Mobile Socialnetworks. During the event the most important issues concerning Social Networks will be discussed: the challenge of new social networks to face-to-face communication, the opportunity to increase the value of our professionalism within “virtual communities”, and the opportunity for big and small firms to make oneself known through a new, more direct and personalized relationship with their customers.

he presence of trade marks is impressive: there is obviously the Internet with MySpace, Facebook and Yahoo, the content producers such as Endemol or MTV, and multinational companies like GM and Coke: it is a deployment of public relationships showing that multinational companies believe in Social Networks or maybe they want people think that they believe in them with a logic of space occupation. For the World Forum the problem of the estimation (in money) of Social Media seems fundamental and it is not a new dilemma for the phenomena on the Internet (see the article by Mark Hopkins, Just What is Social Media, Exactly,

(
<http://mashable.com/2008/11/18/social-media-defined/>).



From a more cultural point of view, it has to be underlined that the concept of Social Media, a topic that has been maybe too abundantly discussed for two years, has the credit for having further increased the ambiguity of the concept of “media” and so for having pointed out the necessity to constantly reflect on the community of communication and of the communication of the community. If “media” have to be first of all communicative, we cannot but wonder why digital media have not managed to be also “social” yet.

One of the many definitions of Social Networks can help us; it was formulated by Monica Fabris who considers these communication channels “means that want to improve communication with new modes of integration of users and multimedia, whose aim, in comparison with other kinds of communication, is to give importance above all to relationships between individuals”

(
http://x.jmailer.com/it/allegati/Abstract_Monica_Fabris_ITA.pdf).

Certainly, it is not the most comprehensive definition of Social Networks, nor the most satisfying, but it is worth taking it into account because it is paradigmatic of the current way of considering the new tools of (re)approach and contact between individuals, who make the

most of the abilities of distributed, extensive and personalized communication of the Internet.



In my opinion, there is no doubt that with Social Networks we are witnessing a new phenomenon of technoculture, it does not matter if it is temporary, lasting or bound to decline; what is important is to underline that interaction and networking multimedia platforms that already existed saw an active participation of a lot of people all over the world when they were focused on social relationships: find old friends, look for a partner or to a person similar to us, the desire to share our tastes and interests, spare time and, although less, work. The fascination of Social Media lies in the opportunity to create, through systems of automatic aggregation, channels of public communication in which informality is mixed with suggestions, ideas and meetings between individuals with similar interests or experiences or

who live in far places.

Moreover, Social Media show that wonders will never cease with the Internet when people think about ways that can improve sociability, that is, the opportunity to express oneself and obviously have fun; it has to be underlined that the play element must not be belittled or underestimated: certainly, some studies such as those by Nicholas A. Christakis and J. H. Fowler on the success of happy people within Facebook make us smile

(
http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/christakis_fowler08/christakis_fowler08_index.html) but nonsense and banalities that are discovered or left as a message in the profiles make users feel closer.



It is difficult to investigate, in this short article, privacy legal problems linked to Social Networks, which are more deeply discussed elsewhere,

problems that, I think, are caused many times by users themselves, who show their imprudence by publishing online; maybe, since they are involved in a new confidential relationship with the Internet, they often operate imprudently or like in a relational chain friends and acquaintances do it for them. In this case, I do not consider completely inadequate popular articles dealing with Social Networks in an apocalyptic way, because at least they act as a deterrent towards their users, who do not want to wonder too much about hidden threats and dangers.

In my opinion, instead, the biographical and mnemonic characteristics of Social Networks are not underlined enough: like in the blogs, which have the form of a diary, but with more intimacy and spontaneity, people are encouraged to update their profiles, because they have many comforts at their disposal. It is not relevant if the profile corresponds to the mood or the thoughts of these people or if it expresses their banality, in any case the user contributes, often unconsciously, to the creation of an archive of his/her social relationships. For this reason, Social Media could even be defined “personal memory” or “biographical media”, but they certainly do not lack the new

concepts associated with Social Networks. A last remark is by the politician of sociability on the Internet. As Carlo Gambescia underlined in a recent message on the Internet, the definition of virtual relationships leaves something to be desired: the ideal of participative democracy and tools that give importance to acquaintances and relational abilities are all essential, but “benevolence is not sufficient if it is your enemy that considers you that way. Evil is unfortunately a social reality. We have it to reckon with”.

<http://carlogambesciametapolitics.blogspot.com/2009/01/franco-carlini-e-leconomia-del-dono.html>



It is unfortunately in the shortage of tools bringing to a healthy contrast between cultural and political groups that Social Networks exhaust their potentialities and disclose relational dynamics that are too mechanical: as it has often occurred in history as well (Schmitt taught this to us), it is the enemy who reveals the unsoundness of friendships that are struck up too quickly.

www.socialnetworking-forum.com

Cada: Did You Say You Wanted An Evolution?

Marco Mancuso



CADA is a cultural, multi-disciplinary platform based in Lisbon: a centre that organises workshops, meetings, cultural activities and events within that grey area that lies at the margin between art and design.

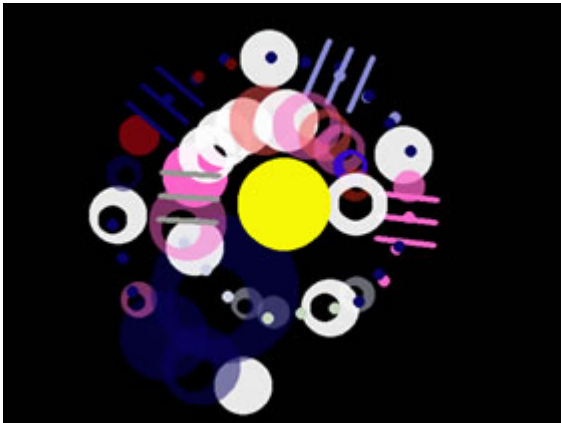
CADA obviously focuses on the new digital technologies and software, even though it would probably be more accurate to say that CADA (like some Italian art and design studios such as Limiteazero, Dot Dot Dot, Todo and others) focuses on the use and misuse of portable technologies and everyday items, that can be reconfigured with an attitude that much has taken from the hacking universe, on design objects, on items for audiovisual production, visualization of complex data, communication and interaction. All this relying on today's most

widespread software technologies: from Processing to VVVV, from Arduino to Sybian, from C++ to Oper Frameworks.

Partly as it occurs in Italy, Sofia Oliveira, Jared Hawkey and Rui Trindade, CADA'S three founding members, have made a virtue out of necessity and, defying the general lack of interest and poor competence of schools and institutions, have raised funds to found an independent society: a place where they can create their own production micro-economy alternating artistic projects with commercial ones and with workshops with international guests, capable of meeting the needs of students in their search for artistic contents and innovative projects.

The chance for this interview sprang from a project that I have undertaken, basically a search in Europe for independent, non-institutional, multi-productive and multi-functional spaces dealing with art and design, and from the invitation that Jared Hawkey received by Celestino Soddu to attend the Generative Art Festival in Milan last November . This was an occasion for CADA to meet some pioneers in art and generative

software, but also to face the excessively academic attitude that still typifies our institutes, that can't thus keep in touch and abreast with that fertile ground of production and creativity and its emerging codes and aesthetics.



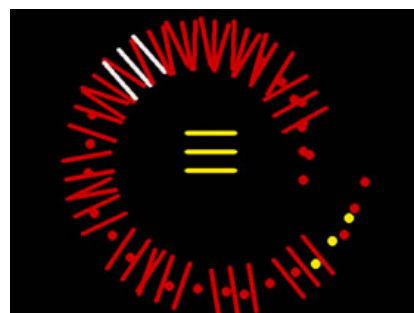
Marco Mancuso: Would you like to talk about CADA's platform. What are your activities, who is involved and what is your background?

Jared Hawkey: CADA was born in 2004. It's interest is art, and experimental work, which is inspired by, or questions new technologies, or technological structures. It's not the only work we're into, at all. But these are the times we live in. And there are some really Big issues in this department. As well as endless possibilities.... galaxies. Anyway long before that, we realised that you could quite easily go insane trying to work with computers on your own. Often projects are so complex they

need combined skills. People need to focus on what they're good at. So we're into collaborative work, but believe the strongest work comes from getting inside it, entering the bubble. Which means really liking any one you work with is fundamental more than being on the same wave length . We work in loose, project-b-project way.

Sofia Oliveira: CADA means Each in Portuguese. We work on two fronts: project work and workshops. There are three core members. Rui Trindade who used to be a journalist, and currently does exhibition design and organises conferences. Jared whose background is fine arts and, me with a background in sociology. I've always been interested in systems, networks and generative processes. And the patterns of everyday life.

Jared: Hidden patterns. Objects with a life of their own, whirring away in their own little worlds. Ambient computing. I suppose we're realists, but there's got be space for colour-field painting, frozen time, and the fact that sometimes it all feels like a stage set.



Marco Mancuso: How does your workshops activity relates with your attitude for artistic and production practice? In other words, is there any possible link with projects such as “TODAY, mobile application” [<http://today.cada1.net>] or “sketcher 1.01” and the results/inputs/outputs that emerge from the workshops that you organize?

Sofia Oliveira: The link between projects and workshops? It’s not a literal link but, yes, there is one. Workshops are normally around issues, tools or processes that we are currently interested in exploring. The link between TODAY is that, back in 2006 I was intrigued by a lack of experimental work for mobile phones. Having already ran several Processing workshops, I decided to organize the first Mobile Processing workshop – where we ended up meeting Heitor Ferreira, who later worked on TODAY with us. When we started doing it – with a tiny budget – we realized pretty quickly why there weren’t that many. It’s really complicated: different operating systems, and hundreds of different devices, if you want to be sure you have to test the app on the actual device, which means a lot of money on phones. So, in terms of development it requires big budget specially if you need to go ‘deeper’ into the operating system. I mean

working in Flash lite could be a bit easier, we did it in C++ for Symbian. It will get easier in the future. So, workshops are fun to do, and a good way of interchanging knowledge and meeting people with similar interests. We’ve done them for Processing, Arduino and we’re doing an iPhone one this February.

Marco Mancuso: Tell something more about “TODAY, mobile application” and about “sketcher 1.01” or about some project of yours you are fully satisfied with. Do you think there can be a sort of common ground that joins these projects also in terms of concept or technique?

Jared Hawkey: TODAY is a piece of ambient computing.

Sofia Oliveira: TODAY is a piece of generative art slash design.

Jared Hawkey: It’s a piece of data visualization.



Sofia Oliveira: It's freeware. An application that visualizes what happens on your mobile phone in terms of communication. So, it's like the story of your day; it has an autobiographical character.

Jared Hawkey: And no it doesn't have any direct relationship with anything we've done before. But there's always been the in hidden patterns.

Sofia Oliveira: Yeah, before we started we weren't mobile phone fetishists at all – we had cheap ones, with black and white screens

Jared Hawkey: Heitor is a mobile developer though, and obviously had a good one.

Sofia Oliveira: But we've always been curious about what communication would look like. And the mobile phone was an obvious device to explore it gets carried around by 3.2 billion people. Also, we wanted to explore the personal. And saw it as intimate device, as opposed to seeing it as another social network tool. Also we wanted to create something that wouldn't require too much interaction to give you something back. These days people are constantly interacting with everything, all the time. It's a slow and quiet piece of software.

Jared Hawkey: It lives in the background – something that you might want to check while waiting for

the bus.



Marco Mancuso: Your attitude seems to be towards those borderline territories of use/misuse of digital technologies and mechanical or electronic instruments, of hacking attitude towards everyday objects and interactive technologies, towards generative software for graphic design and the visualization of complex data. How do you work on new projects and how do you develop a workshops at CADA?

Jared Hawkey: The “perfect mix”, thank you. Hmmn, ur . I don't know, about the “misuse” or “hacking attitude”. We certainly didn't set out to misuse the phone in a dysfunctional, ironic, abusive or useless kind of way. But we lost a lot of hair trying to do something that seemed to all of us stupidly obvious logical and simple. In that way, it was one big hack, trying to do something against the grain – dealing with the

constraints. Because it monitors your calls in real-time, there was the question of getting it passed by the powers that be – that is getting it Symbian signed. We never really knew whether they'd approve it or not until it passed. But yes, otherwise, it was conceived and made in an uncontrolled manner.

Sofia Oliveira: When we start something we try not to think too much – whether it's art or design. We see where it takes us. So the distinction is never a starting point. What I'm interested in design is its distribution model, I'm interested in reaching people in a similar way relating to their everyday life, as opposed to have the work living in a gallery.

Jared Hawkey: Living?... on a life support system.



Sofia Oliveira: Yeah... I like the idea of a piece being carried around in peoples' handbags... or plastic bags.

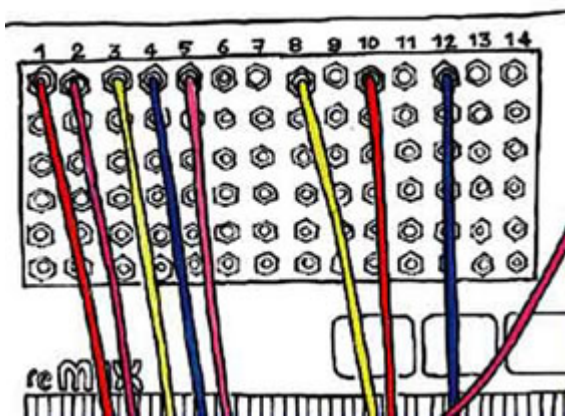
That's it.

Jared Hawkey: I don't know. If you mean that design works with the world of commodities, directing itself to the generation of pre-experienced sensations and art doesn't, then the TODAY is probably a piece of art. But when we made it we thought of it as a piece of design, only because Art puts a lot pressure on things. And – this might be because my definition of Art as defined by the academies, of which I'm a product, is too narrow – because the idea of it being reflexive, in terms of its place in discourse and production, was not an intention. We also saw it existing in the social, running on a device that's the ultimate piece of consumer hardware – three reasons to call it design. Still as Sofia said is not something that bothers us. The designers call it art, and the artists look at you as if you're in league with the devil.

Sofia Oliveira: When we talk to designers that come from a more market and commercial world and they give us feedback about TODAY, they say we need to improve the service component, the functionality of it, or that it needs to be faster, or that the visual system is too abstract' we think "oh god, this is definitely not a piece of design!" because for us, those things are the key to it – the contemplative and slowness of it. But then when we talk to more arty

people, they seem to have a problem with the mobile phone to start with, and can't really understand why we're not selling it. So I think that we are in an in-between space – and you can call it experimental design.

Jared Hawkey: Ultimately the distinctions need a review. But we won't be holding our breath. We are quite happy being filed under "other".



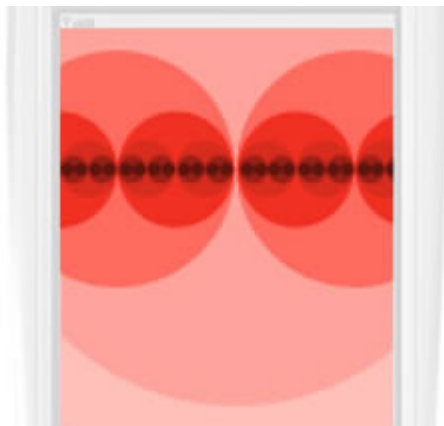
Marco Mancuso: You say that CADA is connected with the Lisbon community and I can imagine that this has been a demanding and long-term task. How difficult is it and what is the degree of attention shown by cultural institution, schools, academies, the public and the media towards culture, design and digital art? In other words, how difficult is it to raise funds and obtain the support by the Institutions to keep CADA'S activities alive and how are you connected with other cultural centres in Lisbon or in Portugal?

Sofia Oliveira: CADA started with two-years of public and private funding with the objective of stimulating the area in Portugal . So we had money to distribute around, which meant we did things like promoting an ideas competition for two years, were winners would get the project co-produced with us – that's where Gonçalo Tavares' Sketcher came from –, a TV programme about Portuguese electronic arts, organized several workshops and events, and so on. Once the funding stopped in 2006, it became more difficult to carry on with this public service. Next year, we will be able to apply for structural funding again but for the time being we need to work on the balance between programming and producing work – if we have to chose it will be the latter. So realistically, what we can carry on doing without funding, is the workshops.

Last year we got funding for specific projects, like TODAY and other project Emotional Object – we are doing with some friends Adriana Sá and John Klima and also for a 4 day Mixed Media Festival we co-produced together with Polar Produce, from Bristol. So we can't really complain. We also have partnerships that allow us to do this with little money, like free space and equipment for the workshops, we got tons of help for the Festival – equipment, spaces. We

are just starting collaboration with a university, a computing engineering lab, to develop work together. It's ok. There is a price to pay if you become too formal. I'm happy in this independent space.

Traditional media don't pay too much attention to technologically inspired work. And I don't pay too much attention to them. When I do something all my communication efforts go online and that normally works well. There is a Portuguese cultural tradition of moaning, complaining. That takes up a lot of energy. I think it is difficult to work in this 'grey' area everywhere. You just have to do it the best you can.



Marco Mancuso: Lastly, how was the experience at the Generative Art festival here in Milan a few months ago and, more in general, what is your opinion about the great hype that has marked generative tools over the last few years? What do you think is the

future for this art/design discipline?

Jared Hawkey: I was out of my depth in Milan. You told us what to expect, but I was totally unprepared. It was academic. Still apart from the embarrassment of one sloppy talk, ... it was all bit chaotic so I got off lightly....anyway, I went to learn, and like a 'good little boy' asked lots of questions. Both Celestino [Soddu] and Enrica [Colabella] are true pioneers. And it was great to be at such a venerable gathering, among the areas' heavy weights – Philip Galanter was there. And I did learn a lot. The only thing which I couldn't quite grasp, was what seemed to be an overall will to complexity. For instance, I understand, and agree with, Celestino's and Enrica's call to Poetics, and loved the way they put the boot into Modernist architecture for failing to create openings for subjectivities, and the consequent lack of Identity in modern cities, and why, therefore, you might want to produce the most complex output. But felt their position that the best way to achieve this is, by starting with complex inputs, was way too militant.

Sofia Oliveira: Is there really hype? It's certainly entered motion graphics, and the commercial stream. What kind of future that is I don't know.

www.cada1.net/

Matthew Barney: Contemporary Mythologies

Francesco Bertocco

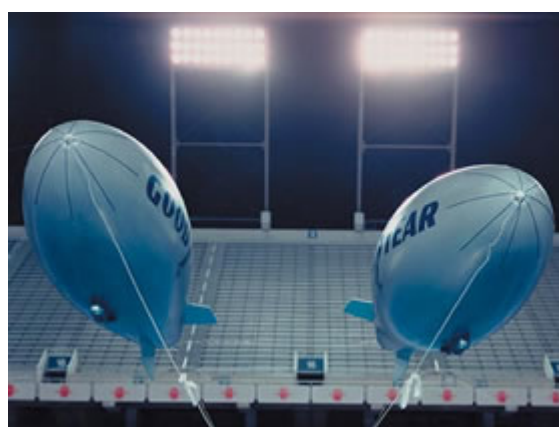


In Turin, at the Fondazione Mario Merz, a retrospective of one of the most visionary and discussed contemporary artists, Matthew Barney, has just ended. In a site-specific set, composed by 5 screens arranged in a circle and others following the site's perimeter, Barney's work was exhibited in all its spectacular mood and in its entirety, together with sculptures and drawings which guided the visitor to a better comprehension.

Matthew Barney is one of those few and long-awaited cases in which the difference between theoretic and artist becomes irrelevant. In some way, it grows rapidly into something aseptic and dull. Matthew Barney's analysis has a plasticity and a mobility which makes it very similar to those

books full of symbols and with mythopoietic orientation, in which the artist's performance moves on the tracks of "Gesamtkunstwerk", the total work. It is a space where funambulism is worthy and well tolerated, where imagination awakes neurotically among the references it has to start from. A space where, if you have not been warned, image's description increases awkwardly the work's structure.

As it should be done in every wide-spreading environment, and with all the risks that it implies, I will only point out the central aspects of the artists' work and career.



The universe created or described by Matthew Barney starts from the idea that the mainstay of all its artistic

evolution is the artist himself and his Body. Since the beginning, the Body, as an evolving machine, as a system in which the pivotal points of his poetics are realized, is the element from which everything starts and is realized. The Body's continuous training, its exceeding among self-imposed forces, creates an hypertrophic state, where the matter it is composed of grows as an indeterminate and asymmetrical mass, out of its natural control. In this state of coerced evolution, Matthew Barney connects the metaphor of creation.

A work is created among psychophysical resistances of the artist. Every initial impulse (a raw and impure state) is followed by some opposing forces, which mediate and discipline this initial state. In the series "Drawing Restraint", produced during the early years of research and study, the artist, physically "restrained" in different ways, creates drawings (or marks, at least), recording these operations with A/V instruments, as they did for performances in the 70 s, when they analyzed the frontiers of language in similar ways, though with different objectives.

In these video tapes the artist himself climbs on walls tied up by partially elastic ropes, he bears weights and body building equipment, so as to put himself to harder and harder tests,

with the only objective of producing a drawing.



This path suggested to Barney to analyze himself and the parts which constitute himself. He identifies three phases in his own evolution, similar to the processes characterizing human nutrition, and marked by a symbol which becomes the artist's cosmogony emblem. The first phase is "Situation", the early state, the raw energy ("Raw"), the sexual undifferentiated impulse; it is followed by "Condition", where the initial raw energy gets processed and disciplined. In the last phase, "Production", the disciplined matter is pushed out, that is to say, "produced"- it is the anal phase.

This early period's production is not limited to recorded (photo and video) performances, but there are also drawings, sculptures, collages, notes. The elements' complexity grew as the artist's research thickened with

references, following the body's cult as a model of universal knowledge. "Field Dressing (orofill)", dated 1989, represents a first step towards the construction of a personal mythology, initially linked to the work's material (body- vaseline - resistances). In this dissertation, his last production from his education in Yale, Matthew Barney builds an action, in which the athletic activity is connected to symbology and rituality.

The artist crosses a room hanging from ropes, completely naked, so as to reach his own emblem realized in Vaseline, that he's going to spread on

every orifice of his own body. This work is the foundation for another work that will become the highest realization of his personal mythology, the work that defines in an "esoteric" way the theoretical and symbolic system of the "Path". The "Cremaster Cycle" is Matthew Barney's opera omnia, his most significant work. There are plenty of exegesis, theoretical dissertations and important re-readings about this work. It is the reconstruction of a visual universe, under the artist's and his sign's total control, where lots of characters are involved.



The “Cremaster Cycle” is a set of myths and models of the American culture, but, as well as it happens for the greatest post-modern reports, such as Pynchon, DeLillo, David Foster Wallace, it is supported by any kind of cultural extract, such as Greek mythology, kabuki theatre, Freemasonry, vaudeville, shintoist ceremonies, esotericism and Nordic mythology. The biologic being, the artist, Matthew Barney, grows and models himself through fragments of modern and mythological history, among physical resistances, among energies invading his organic structure so as to become myths, example, human being.

Gonads’ initial movement is the cause for the initial choice of genre. Their movement decides the sex, their movement is the example for a resistance on which life is placed on since its beginning. Matthew Barney’s Cremaster represents the initial resistance during the moment of

creation. Existence matures after this passage has been concluded and the unborn child’s genre is finally defined. He has been given all the raw material which will be the foundation of all his existence.

“Cremaster Cycle” is a huge fresco about the development of an a priori existence, the “es” central region, the principle of shape. In the five episodes it is made of, Matthew Barney as an actor plays lots of transformations, embodying emblematic characters, made up of lots of references. Beside the vastness of content, the “Cycle” utilizes a specific cinematographic grammar, shaped by a decidedly sculptural and rarefied use of time, by optics which alter perspective so as to get a greater involvement in the performance, and by a suggestive music, redefining the sound’s space.



The audience watches, beside the moving images, according to Barney’s initial production, a variety of

sculptures deriving from movies' set designs, some still inedited, drawings, display windows with objects linked to Matthew Barney's imagery, such as ruins and extracts of an imaginary universe. These worlds' traces left form the artist in galleries and museums, are the most vivid necessity of representing a universe, instead of making it live, of symbolizing a mythology, that is moving towards common directions but is anyway a closed, hermetic system, where reading can only confuse, rarefy, to the most rational definition.

Matthew Barney's art is suggestive and leaves interpretation free to move, but at the same time, it keeps interpretation distant, disorienting it as it happens in the interpretation of a myth, the strength of which is in believing and seeing, more than in understanding.

<http://matthewbarney.fondazionememorz.org/>

You Tube And The Accidental Videoart

Monica Ponzini



YouTube has radically changed not only the way we look at video, but also the role of the audience and the language of video. No longer a mere spectator for the images created by the Author, Youtube users are increasingly involved in the making of unique and peculiar videos, unexpected “viral” trends that generate in turn new influences and all shared on the Web.

Certainly YouTube is the product of a technology revolution that allows practically anyone to record, film, edit and perform postproduction tasks with basic means which are almost intuitive by now. But the originality and variety of products that circulate on video portals (Youtube, ma but also Vimeo, or the more recent Seesmic), has exceeded all expectations. From extremely basic segments such as the

“long portraits” where a person stares at the camera, to the message chains like the one started by MadV; from “hallucinated” videos made by fans -where a whining Chris Crocker tells the world to leave Britney Spears alone, to real music videos, that sometimes brought a band to its commercial success like with the band OK Go

And the lifespan of a video on the Web doesn’t stop here: once it’s posted and shared, it can be recast, mashed-up, and mixed to create a new piece of art where the original author’s images and purposes are mixed with other authors’ purposes and means (that could be other images, thematic connections or even software).



An example -among many- of the artistic and social effects of the "YouTube phenomenon" was the evening dedicated to video triptychs held at Postmasters Gallery in New York. Organized by the art collective "Artists Meeting" and curated by Thomas Hutchison, Maria Joao Salema and James Andrews, the event showed a compilation of "accidental video art": video triptychs where the most diverse products of the Internet were aggregated thanks to a custom software, You3b, an Eyebeam project produced by Jeff Crouse and Andrew Mahon.

These three-channel videos that have extremely diverse features and themes- are products of the "YouTube" mine: "The project takes off from the freedom that you find in YouTube itself, from the eclectic nature of it. These videos are a sort of modern narrative, made not with words but with images. There's a hunger for information, for images, for stories and there's also a library that is expanding very rapidly" explains Raphaele Shirley, one of the organizers.

"For me, what was interesting about YouTube are just the crazy, fascinating, wild videos that people publish" says James Andrews, "It's a little bit like public access TV, a kind of ad hoc personal media that can be very serious and profound, or can be

very absurd and random. My favorite discovery on YouTube was the subculture of people who documented their own washing machine – and this is a very large subculture, pretty massive at this point- from the aesthetic or technical point of view . In the end I made a triptych of washing machines and I'm convinced that on social level in a way is connected to the American tradition of tinkering with your own car or motorcycle ".



An interesting aspect of the event is definitely the "authorial shift" of the final works: "This show mutilates the whole idea of ownership", notes James Andrews, "You really can't figure out who on Earth owns these triptychs: you have one set of people who created the triptych software, then you have three different groups of people who potentially created the three videos, you have the three different YouTube accounts that published the videos which may or

may not be the same people who created them, you then have the curators, then you have Artist Meeting and you then have Postmasters Gallery. And each of the original videos could be removed from the Net at any time ”

In a sense, this project takes to the extreme not only the concept of authoriality, and the fact that new media art often needs team work in order to be produced, but also, says James Andrews, “it could simply obliterate the human factor, which I think is even more interesting. No one in particular got credit for anything in the show it was just something that happened ”.



An event in which each viewer the last link of this long chain looks at the triptychs, getting his or her own, very personal narrative: for Raphaele Shirley “this kind of triptych really lends itself to non-linearity: you can’t grasp a single image or a single story and follow it through from beginning to end. It’s really about cross connections, cross pollination of ideas, like unconscious thinking and the way you create a dream, or the way you connect data ”.

www.postmastersart.com/

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www.you3b.com

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